

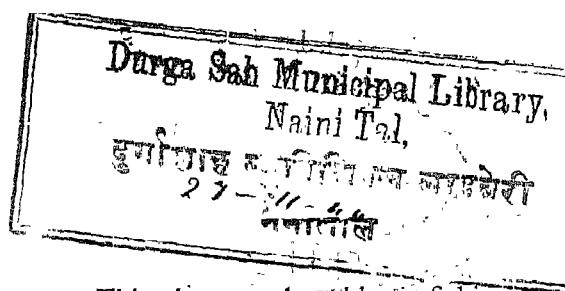


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This, the seventh and latest fishing book by the "inventor" of the term "thread-line angling," now universally used, is based on a first selection (with original material added) of articles contributed to leading journals. All fishermen will find herein much invaluable information and advice which could not come other than from so experienced an exponent as Alexander Wanless. Care has been taken to avoid repetition of material published in the previous volumes. There is, of course, much about the thread line.

Poaching, people, nature, fish, rivers, methods, experiences, practical information and much else besides—such is the catch in this well-filled creel of generous size.

ANGLER'S CREEL

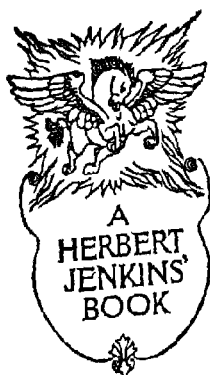
ANGLER'S CREEL

BY
ALEXANDER WANLESS

AUTHOR OF

*The Science of Spinning for Salmon and
Trout; The Modern Practical Angler;
The Angler and the Thread Line; Thread
Line Angling Questions Answered; Angling
Methods; Rods on Fast Rivers*

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PREFACE AND DEDICATION

BLAIR DRUMMOND AND THE SPIRIT OF ANGLING

A RIVER, like man, is a friendly thing. It has character and personality. Be it a little river or a big one, it mirrors life. From the womb of hill or lake it comes in infant purity. It prattles through childhood. Through lusty youth it passes to manhood, receiving as it goes tributaries of experience. It images adventure and misadventure, joy and grief, success and failure, promise and frustration; it has its turbulences and excesses, as life has. At last it reaches mellowed maturity. As one who has put hard-learned lessons into practice, it moves at a reflective pace through an evening of peacefulness. And at the end of its journey it slips quietly into the ultimate and inevitable sea, but not, any more than man does, into oblivion. Merging with the ocean that girdles the earth it serves still, as man, by what he has done, well or ill, contributes to the sum of life from which all men draw.

Every river has character. All men may see it, but not in the same way. It may be there are individuals to whom a river is merely a place to fish in. There may be individuals who go to a river only in search of pleasant, harmless excitements, but to the vast majority these, surely, are subsidiary. We all want to catch fish in an exciting way; the loveliest river would not attract the angler if it held no fish—but sentient man needs more than that. Do not most men seek the river because it supplies a spiritual need? Running water is a marvellous restorer. Who, wandering from stream to pool, rod in hand, plots evil, thinks evil, does evil? Who, leaving a river, is not eager to return to it?

That is the heaven at work. The spirit of the river

calls only to the good in man. "Caught anything?" we may be asked. "A twenty-pounder," or "half a dozen," or "a couple of brace," we may reply, not without satisfaction. Or we may confess to "nothing." If we said, "I caught peace and quiet and a few fish besides," eyebrows would be raised. Such a reply would be put down as affectation. It might be truth, but it could not be understood except by anglers or such as find in nature what the angler has found.

What is this spirit of the river which can captivate instantly and at first sight? Every river has water and banks and shingle and boulders and streams and pools; there is grass about it and bracken and trees and bushes. Wild flowers deck it and birds sing. There is over it the miracle of the everchanging sky. Every river has that context, yet no two rivers make quite the same appeal. When we think of a river we think not of the whole, but of certain parts. It may be a single pool. As the eyes, or the voice, or some mannerism may fix a human being in our mind, so that we always associate him or her with it, so a small part of a river may colour our conception of the whole. And to that one part we seek often to return. Something within us reaches out to something within the river. An unseen but vital mating has taken place. No priest officiated, no vows were made. There were no witnesses and could be none. For this union of the spirit of the river and the spirit of man was intimate, personal and strictly private.

That has brought me to the heart of the matter and to Blair Drummond and the river Teith, of which Blair Drummond is the lowest stretch, extending from Bridge of Teith, west of the placid, tidy townlet of Doune, to the junction of the Forth, a distance of a few miles. I have, by the kindness of the laird, fished one time or another in most of the stretch, but when I think of

Blair Drummond I think of three pools mainly, Castle Pool, Chapel Pool, Horse Hole. There is no mystery about why these pools make so powerful an appeal to the imagination. It is not that Castle and Chapel pools have yielded me, on more than one occasion, six salmon in a day. It has little to do with fish, much to do with setting, and more with what the mind sees and the senses feel. For me the Castle pool is dominated by the ancient Castle of Doune. It stands there on its green, undulating mound, several hundred feet above river level. I know little of the story behind its thick walls and slits of windows that fear the light. The castle belongs to the Moray family, one of whose earls is known because he was bonnie, darling of a tragical queen, cam' soundin' through the toun, and was slain. But when I gaze on the Castle of Doune I think less of that romantical tale than of the imagined spectacle of lords and ladies gay sauntering upon the untilled sward. I hear their talk and laughter. I see their mannered airs and behind it all jealousy, ambition, intrigue, and the frailties that are human. Somewhere a lute plays to a sweet, plaintive, distant voice plucking at the strings of the heart. Within the castle menials prepare the feast. As the saunterers saunter and the scullions hasten their task the salmon slunge in the pool below, then as now.

We have fished the pool out and take our way along the treed and grassy path which skirts another pool, the Ardoch, which, though attractive, has not fixed itself in my mind. We are going to the Chapel Pool. It gets its name from a small chapel which is also a family vault. Stones in that sepulchre were hewn in antiquity. They summon from the hoary and misty past scenes very different from these already described. There is chanting and prayer, tonsured monks and priestly admonitions. There is holy dusk and burning candles, an altar and a

crucifix. There is weeping. Heads are bent in penitence and humility. There is here nothing carnal but men and women swayed for the moment by unworldly thoughts and things.

As we wade down the pebbly bed of the long Chapel Pool, where a thirty-yard cast will cover the best of a full river, we are under that old-time spell, but above and beyond is the spirit of Horse Hole. I don't know why it is called that, but as I wade down Chapel Pool my eyes seek Horse Hole and the sky that frames it. One sees Horse Hole only from the channel of Chapel Pool. The eyes fasten on a point, a tiny promontory, jutting into the river with a tall tree rising from it. There are other trees, there is the exhilarating white splash of slung salmon, but it is the point with its tall tree, silhouetted against a sky that speaks of celestial things that fascinates and moves one like an old, familiar melody fitly played. Blessed was the hand that planted that tree long ago, blessed the seeing eye that guided the hand. May storm and the axe spare it.

That, for me, is Blair Drummond. It has other and better pools. Immemorial beeches give shade and shelter beside them. For the most part, in fishing them one need not set foot in the water, and that is a great comfort these carless days, but to me they are just pools.

This dissertation on a few hundred yards of water, flowing through the haunts of men, brings out another remarkable fact about the spirituality of rivers. It has nothing to do with remoteness. What is remote is aloof and may be oppressive and frightening. Rivers to be friendly must know men.

A. WANLESS

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

THE contents of this book, with a few exceptions, consist of selections of articles contributed to newspapers and journals. The writer hereby expresses his thanks to the editors of *The Glasgow Herald*, *The Scotsman*, *The Field*, *Country Life*, *The Fishing Gazette*, *Golf Monthly*, *Angling*, *The Scots Magazine*.

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ANGLER'S CREEL

CHAPTER I

GEORGE, JACK AND A SALMON

THIS is a Scots version of a tale of temptation. Call them George and Jack. The names don't matter. They were two shrewd business men. The bond between them was a love of the sea. They were spending a long, lazy holiday cruising about the bays and islands of the west coast of Scotland in a small yacht. A lazy holiday it certainly was, for the days were long and hot and windless. Before leaving the Clyde they had laid in enormous stores of tinned food in great variety. And after a fortnight the sight of tinned food had a worse effect on them than "plum and apple" had on the average Tommy during the Great War.

One day they dropped anchor in a secluded bay. It was a broiling afternoon. Presently George said to Jack:

"How would you like a nice piece of fresh salmon for tea to-night?"

Jack grunted.

"Cold, with mayonnaise and cucumber?"

"Don't torture me!"

"Look over there."

"Over there" was a salmon-stake net. The receding tide had left a small salmon hanging in it. Very silvery and very tempting was that small fish.

"We could have it aboard in five minutes."

Now, Jack had a conscience, but the craving for food other than in tins temporarily stifled it, and so presently,

in the dinghy, George and Jack rowed to the salmon net and stole the fish. They were about to return to the yacht triumphant, when from the shore, a few hundred yards away, there came a mighty clamour. A boat put out manned by an individual who rowed furiously towards them.

"Hell!" said Jack nervously. "Who's this?"

"Looks like the devil," George replied dryly.

The occupant of the boat presently revealed himself to be a big tigerish-looking individual with a large red, shaggy beard. He was furious. He was shouting. He covered the few hundred yards from the shore in record time. As he drew near the dinghy they made out a little of what he was trying to tell them.

"I have got you now. I have been waiting for a long time to catch you, and I have got you at last. You will come with me to the polliss office."

"Just a moment, friend," Jack said ingratiatingly. "Let me explain, if you please."

"I do not please. You can do your explaining to the sheriff, my fine fellow," was the retort. "I must ask you to come with me to the polliss office."

"Where is the polliss office?" George said.

"It iss just over the hill," was the reply, "about ten miles from here."

"Do you mean to say," cried Jack, "that you want us to walk ten miles, over a mountain, on a hot day like this?"

"I'll see you and all the police and all the sheriffs in hell before I go," said George angrily.

"Very well, then, the polliss will come here, and that will be so much the worse for both of you," red beard replied.

George, roused, was about to make an apt retort when Jack hastily intervened.

"Shut up, you ass!" he said. "Leave this situation to me. It needs tact."

George subsided sulkily.

Jack cleared his throat and spoke as follows: "If you will listen to me for a moment I think I will be able to make you understand the position."

"I doubt it," George said gloomily. "He hasn't the brains."

"My friend and I are two business men," Jack continued. "We have been living exclusively on tinned food for fourteen days. When we saw this small fish hanging on the net we were overcome with a craving for fresh food. If it had been possible we would, of course, have bought the fish, but we did not know to whom it belonged. If you, my friend, had been living on canned food for a fortnight you would have acted just as we did."

"Then you will no doubt be pleading guilty with an explanation," said red beard promptly. "I do not think the explanation will impress the sheriff in these parts."

"What's the value of the ruddy fish?" George asked abruptly.

"I am not thinking of the value of the fish," was the reply, delivered with dignity. "It is the principle. Let me give you my side of the case and you will understand how I feel. For weeks some rascal has been stealing the salmon from my nets. I have spent days and nights watching for him, and when I saw your boat come into the bay——"

"Boat!" roared George. "Did you say boat?"

"Yacht," red-beard corrected, "and anchor near the nets I said to myself, 'I've got the rascal now!'"

"Well, you haven't, I'm afraid," said Jack. "We came into the bay an hour ago for the first time this season."

"Maybe that is true," said red-beard, "and maybe it is not, but you will always be a warning for others."

"I'll give you a pound to say no more about it," said Jack.

"Idiot!" hissed George.

"You are making the thing worse for yourselves, gentlemen," said red-beard sternly. "It iss not a question of money at all, but of right and wrong. It is useless to try to bribe me. I must insist on you coming with me."

"As I've said already," George exclaimed, "I'll see you in hell first." There was a stubborn gleam in his eye and his chin was sticking well out.

Jack said more sweetly than ever: "My friend forgot himself for a moment. Please excuse him. He does not understand how a West Highland gentleman looks at these things. But consider our situation. If you prosecute and we are convicted, what will happen when we get back to Glasgow?"

"No doubt your reputations will suffer," said red-beard blandly. "Stealing a salmon from a poor man's net iss not a crime to boast about."

"Crime, my foot," said George. "Glasgow business men would look upon pinching a salmon as a huge joke."

"Yes," said Jack, tacking, "it is the laughter we are afraid of. A West Highland gentleman will, I am sure, understand the devastating effects of ridicule."

"Indeed I do," said red-beard. "I am sorry for you, gentlemen. I am not a hard man."

Jack pressed home his advantage.

"I am sure you're not," he said. "My friend and I would gladly pay for the salmon, which in the market would, I think, fetch no more than fifteen shillings. Shall we say two pounds?"

Red-beard smiled as he said: "If I were to proceed with the case you would, no doubt, be engaging a clever lawyer from Glasgow. That would cost you a good bit. The fine would be ten pounds and you would have to

pay the costs of the prosecution. They are usually three guineas. There would not be much left out of twenty pounds."

"And nothing at all for you," said George, "and that would be sad."

Jack kicked him savagely.

"Well," said Jack, "shall we say a fiver and shake hands?"

Red-beard hesitated. Jack made a thrust.

"Better take the fiver," he said; "it will save you a long, disagreeable walk on a hot day like this. And probably the policeman will be away from home, anyway."

"I am not a hard man," the hairy one repeated. "I should not like to have the gentlemen laughed at."

"There's a hero," George cried derisively.

Jack pressed the fiver into red-beard's hand. "Let's call it square," he urged.

"I must have the fish, too," said red-beard quickly.

"Of course," said Jack sweetly. He offered his hand which was shaken heartily. Red-beard lifted the fish and placed it carefully in his boat under the stern seat. He put the money with great deliberation into his pocket. He then spat on his hands, said "Good afternoon, gentlemen," and rowed rapidly away.

"Well, that's that," said Jack with vast relief.

"The lousy, red-haired swine!" was what George said in reply.

In the cool of the evening, after a hateful tea, in which tinned food played a large part, George and Jack rowed ashore in order to visit an inn which they knew of where the beer was good. When they entered the bar there was red-beard! He came forward and, holding out his hand in the friendliest way, said blandly, "Good evening, gentlemen. I am pleased to see you. Will you drink with me?"

Jack, fearing some explosiveness from George, promptly accepted a small whisky. That consumed, he returned the compliment. After red-beard had swallowed two double whiskies at their expense he shook hands with them again and said with a broad smile, "I bid you good evening, gentlemen. It has been a pleasure to see you again."

When he had gone George told the innkeeper about their adventure. The innkeeper invited them through to the kitchen. There he displayed a small salmon.

"That the fish?" he asked.

"If it isn't, it's its twin brother," growled George.

"I've just bought it from him," said the innkeeper, "for ten bob. He's not the owner of the nets, by the way—in fact he's one of the biggest poachers in the district."

On the way back to the yacht Jack said to George: "What gets me on the raw is the thought that that red-bearded — was going to pinch the fish himself when he saw us mugs come along!"

"And you called him a West Highland gentleman," George retorted. "Rats!"

CHAPTER II

POACHING ADVENTURE ON TWEED

SPORT was afoot! Auld Watt had run over to Tweed in the morning to see if, following the heavy rain of the previous day, she was "up." He had seen at a glance that she was waxing and there was every prospect of a spate. His poacher's heart warmed at the sight, for it was the month of December and a "run" of "fish" seemed certain. He made up his mind on the spot. He would get a few of the callants

and they would go in the darkness to a certain spot. There they would have a throw of the net and great would be their reward. He did not doubt it. Had it not been so many times?

When he got home he passed the word to Young Watt, his first-born. "She's risin' fast. We'll gae oot the nicht. Get twa three o' the callants."

"Ir ee burnin'?" said Young Watt, who was keen as an otter on anything with fish in it.

"Na," replied the old one. "Ah canna thole the licht. We'll tak' the net." Saying which he passed through to the shed in the garden to get everything ready against night. Since the possession of a net is in itself a "crime," Auld Watt was discreet in the movements. He carefully shut the door of the shed to ensure against any surprise visitation. Even the mistress was not privy to poaching exploits, and as for the bairns—if they got as much as a keek of the net it would be all through the "toun" in a twinkling that Auld Watt was "gaun poachin'."

So Auld Wattie was the very spit of caution. In the half-light of the shed he worked. First he lifted a heap of old, empty sacks that lay in a corner of the shed. There lay the net. It was about 40 feet in length and six in depth. It was fastened to thin but strong ropes, and at intervals along the bottom was tied heavy lead tubing. On the rope at the top of the net were fastened many loops. With the eye of an expert Auld Wattie went over the net, testing here and trying there to see that there were no weak spots. Satisfied, he rolled it up carefully and placed it in a sack. From another corner of the shed he lifted several sheep's bladders, and blowing lustily soon had them filled. These were the floats, without which it would be impossible to work the net. Next he took a bundle of poles from a place where

no idle eye could light upon them. The poles were each six feet in length, and there were eight of them. At each end of the pole there was a stout brass ferrule, which enabled them to be joined together, making a pole long enough and strong enough to carry the net. He bound them together with rope. Lastly he got a long rope and stowed it away in the sack with the net. He then left the shed, locked the door, put the key in his pocket, and went off to his "wark"—an odd job of an hour or two.

* * * * *

Meanwhile Young Watt had been passing the word. Tam and Wull were not only willing but anxious. Sandy was more cautious.

"Is't burnin'?" he speired, his eyes glistening. For Sandy was death with the "licht."

"Na, the net," was Young Watt's reply.

"Ach! There's nae sport wi' the net," said Sandy, disgusted.

"The auld man canny bide the light. He's scared o' the bylies."

After a little coaxing Sandy agreed to go. The last man to be seen was Jock. Jock was important. His father had a garage and that gave Jock command of a car. But Young Wattie had no doubts about Jock, who was born a human but was by nature a water-rat. It was arranged that Jock would bring the car to the road-end at ten o'clock. When the hour came the gear was stowed and they set off.

* * * * *

The night was dark as pitch. Not a star was to be seen. There was a high wind, and just a hint of rain.

"Is't a guid nicht for't, Watt?" asked Tam.

"A guid nicht?" said Auld Wattie. "Goad, it was just sic a nicht as this twal' year sin' that Pate Lowrie,

Bob Simpson an' me lifted twa hunnerwecht o' fish wi' three draws o' the net. An' in the very bit Ah'm takin' ye tae. Three draws o' the net. Goad! We could hardly pu' it up the bank for the wecht!"

Along the road they sped.

"How many secks hae ye got, Wattie, ma man?" asked Auld Watt presently.

"Fower."

"Fower!" said the old man in vexation. "They'll never haud them. Ye should hae brocht hauf a dizzen. Ah mind yae nicht, just sic another is this. Sam Broom, Andra' Wellimson' an' me lifted sae mony fish we had tae fling hauf o' them back intae the watter. It was fair seekenin'. There was nae sic thing as a caur in thae days. W'i a caur ye're nae suner dune than ye're hame. Safe as the bank as long's ye dinna use the licht. Ah canna thole the licht."

By artful yarns the old poacher worked on the callants so that when the car drew up, lights out, at the appointed place, all were eager.

* * * * *

Auld Wattie took command. He untied the cords round the bundle of poles. Half were given to Tam and half to Sandy. Young Wattie took the net and Auld Watt the bladders and the rope. Tam, who was bothered with a temperament, took out a cigarette and struck a match. "Pit oot that licht!" said Auld Wattie in a hoarse whisper. "Ye donart deevil, ye'll hae every bylie on Tweed efter is." Tam dropped the match as if it had stung him. "Noo, gang quiet. No a word," said Auld Wattie. "Efter me."

To get to the waterside a scaur had to be negotiated. It was trying work in the darkness. And dangerous work too. A slip might mean a broken leg, arm, or neck. Down a narrow fishers' path they picked their

way with many a muttered oath as they were caught by root or bramble trailer. Stones, dislodged in the downward process, rattled down the scaur. Presently Tam—he with the temperament—tripped over a whin root. He dropped his poles and what with pain and fright let out a roar.

“Guid goad!” cried the ready Wattie. “Ye’ll wake the deid. Keep yer fit in yer mooth, man!”

“Ah’ve lost the poles, Wattie,” wailed Tam.

“Guid goad!” was the only reply.

The poles were duly recovered, and the journey was resumed. Soon it was Young Watt’s turn. The net became entangled in a bramble bush. He tried to free it, and got his hands torn in the process. But Young Watt was wise in his day and generation. He said nothing but gave the net a mighty tug. It came away, and Young Watt quickly made up on the others.

At last they got to the foot of the scaur, and in single file covered the short distance to the water. It was easy going now, dark as it was.

* * * * *

The net was got ready for action. The scaur sheltered them from the wind which was heard roaring overhead. “A grand nicht,” said Auld Watt, “and a grand waiter. The fish’ll be rinnin’ like the deevil himsel’!” The place to be netted was the slack water lying behind a long putt or cairn built out into the pool. The spated river roared round and over the end of the cairn. Running fish lay in the easy water below it until they had regained strength to resume their upward journey. Scores of salmon might be lying in the shelter of the cairn, and when fish were rife a net run through the water would take heavy toll. The method of using the net was simplicity itself. One of the poachers gripped the end of the long rope attached to the pole and took up a position some distance downstream. The other poachers pushed the

pole out into the stream. The bladders at the end of the pole made what would otherwise be an impossible task comparatively easy. The lead fastened to the bottom of the net kept it suspended evenly in the water. When the net had been pushed out to its utmost limit the poacher downstream pulled on the rope and the net was drawn up the bank. If a good haul was made the presence of the fish was known by the increasing weight of the net.

* * * * *

Sandy took charge of the long rope. Auld Wattie superintended on the putt and lent a hand with the pole. Dangerous work. The roaring of the river, a mighty waste of water which can be heard but not seen, was awesome. The strain on the nerves was severe, because a slip might well mean death. Quickly the net was pushed into the river. The weight of flood water caught it and began to carry it downstream. But strength and no small amount of skill did the trick, and presently all was ready for the haul to be made.

Not a word was spoken. The excitement was intense. Steadily the net was drawn in.

"Dae ye find onything, faither?" says Young Wattie in the hoarsest of hoarse whispers.

"Goad, she's gey licht!" replied the old one. Light she was, for when the net was beached, not a fish, not a scale of a fish was to be seen. "Saw ye ever the like!" said Auld Wattie, aghast. "No a haet! That dings a'."

In the darkness they could feel each other's look of chagrin. "There's no' a fish in the waiter!" cried Sandy in scorn, while the temperamental Tam burst out into a loud guffaw. "There's that eediot again," croaked Auld Watt fiercely. "Fell 'im, somebody. He'll hae the bylies doon on is, as sure as death." That silenced Tam.

"We'll gie't a rest an' ha'e another draw," said Auld

Wattie presently. "There's bound to be fish rinnin' on a nicht like this."

The poachers sat themselves down on the wet grass. For a quarter of an hour, which seemed an age, they sat there, then the whole process was repeated. The result was the same. Not a fish. Auld Wattie was dumb-founded. Never in his whole experience, he declared, had he known the like. On a night like this, in a water like that!

"The deil tak't!" he said suddenly.

"What's the maitter, father?" said Young Wattie.

"Maitter! There's a hole in the net that wad lat a hoose through! Hoo the deevil has that come about?"

"A hole?" exclaimed Young Wattie innocently, remembering the incident at the bramble bush.

"Aye, a hole, ye born eediot! Ye tore it comin' doon the scaur. The net was hale when Ah pit it i' the caur, for Ah gaed ower every inch o't i' the mornin'." There was a hint of satisfaction in Auld Wattie's voice despite his rage, for the failure of the operations had been clearly explained. There was nothing for it but to mend the net in the darkness as best they could with twine.

"We'll ha'e a last draw," said Auld Wattie.

* * * * *

Once more the net was pushed out over the river. Once more they began to pull it in. More slowly this time, almost fearfully, as if afraid of the result. They had not pulled more than a couple of yards when a weight was suddenly felt in the net.

"They're there this time," croaked Auld Wattie triumphantly.

The weight grew heavier and heavier.

There was no doubt about it, the net was well filled.

Sandy began to puff with excitement. The temperamental Tam began to sweat. He could hardly draw the

rope. At last they came to the net. With a heave they had it on the bank. They ran forward to seize the struggling fish.

There were no struggling fish. But weight there was in plenty. It took the form of a large tin carboy—a monstrous carboy which had once held oil, but which was now half-filled with water and gravel!

Auld Wattie began to swear and Young Wattie to laugh. Then they all swore and laughed in turns, until—

“For goad’s sake, c’wa hame oot o’ this!” cried Auld Wattie; “the Deil’s in’t.”

CHAPTER III

“ ALL-DAY ” RISE ON LEADER

TO be asked by an editor* to turn the mind back over thirty years of trout fishing in order to find out the “best” day is a strange experience! What is meant by the word “best?” Immediately any idea that it means *biggest* is discarded for usually one makes the best baskets in conditions far from pleasant. If number of trout slain were the test that would be no difficulty in deciding what was the best day. Consult the diary, find the day with the largest catch, and describe it. How easy it would be; but how misleading! It might not have been the “best” day at all! On reflection I find that I must describe the day which lives most happily in memory—a sunshiny day, and moreover, a day devoted entirely to fishing with a single dry fly!

* This article was written by request of the Editor of *The Scots Magazine*, who invited a number of sportsmen to describe their “best day.”

The restriction is not so arbitrary as might appear. For it is the essence of simplicity and in angling simplicity means the maximum of pleasure.

Consider what the single dry fly implies. No tangling of the cast, no droppers fast in the cord of the landing net, no blind chucking and chancing.

But bait fishing can be pleasant.

Of course it can, but what kind of bait fishing is not *messy* and inconvenient? Worm? Minnow? Stonefly? They have all their disadvantages. And first, you must "*catch your hare*," and that is sometimes hard labour. And having caught your hare you must carry it. To impale any kind of creature, living or otherwise on a series of hooks, is not pleasant; it is tolerable only because it is the means to a profitable end.

And that constant renewing of soft baits! How trying it can be.

The problem has been solved! I know exactly what I want for my best day—sunshine, warmth, rising trout, no wind, no long walks in waders between pools, and, at the end, a basket good to look upon with one or two pounders on the top.

Such a day occurs but seldom; so seldom that it has been my fortune to enjoy it but once—once in thirty years! Often the sun and the calm and the streams and pools close together, but how seldom all is graced with rising trout!

Yet, early in June in the year 1916 it was my good fortune to experience such a day. I was on holiday in the Border town of Lauder at the time. The river had been well rested for almost two years, the majority of the local anglers being "at the war." It is surprising how quickly the angling in a river improves. This is shown by the fact that during that brief holiday of twelve fishing days I averaged 5 lbs. of trout per day fishing "fly only." That is pretty good going consider-

ing and at that time I was a tyro with the floater. My methods were probably wrong. The river was small and the weather was hot—conditions unfavourable for fly fishing during the day but perfect for clear water worm and minnow, but I knew nothing of thread-line fishing in these days or the 5 lbs. average might have been doubled.

On that "best" day I didn't get to the water until ten o'clock. It was a clear, hot day with "not a breath of wind." And how glorious were the surroundings, how green the grass, how fresh the trees!

The Leader is a small river below Lauder, with streams and pools close together and of a perfect fishing width; that is to say, every inch of water can be covered. Wading, for the most part, is unnecessary except for crossing—a great boon and helps to fill the basket.

A glance at the first pool showed the rings of rising fish. In every pool fish were rising! Not mad, splashy rises such as one sees when there is a hatch of fly and trout are taking the nymph, but the quiet, purposeful rises of trout feeding on the top. I was astonished—and chagrined. Had I lost a glorious opportunity? Would the trout—it happens on these early morning rises—go off the feed quickly? I remember my dismay when two men at work nearby told me that the trout had been rising all morning and they had been there since six o'clock. With feverish speed I mounted the rod and tied on to my cast a Red Quill.

I remember these particular flies very well. Being still a novice at the dry fly, I had had the usual beginner's difficulty of getting winged flies to cock properly. So I had dressed some flies for myself with the wings spread out and lying at a rakish forward angle. Great was my delight when I found there was no difficulty in getting them to float perfectly. Moreover, they were dressed as a dry fly ought to be dressed—lightly, without

these double wings boasted by the dry fly of commerce. I started killing trout at once—the usual Leader fish averaging $\frac{1}{4}$ lb. Presently I came to a nice pool. The river was so small that the greater part of it was too shallow and unfishable, but at the top there was a nice streamy neck. On the opposite bank some willow bushes were growing, their branches trailing in the water. In a small space between two of these bushes was an eddy—and the rings of some very desirable trout were showing steadily in it. But to catch any of these fish meant really tricky fishing. For five times out of six the fly was pulled under the surface by the current before it reached the fatal spot.

I spent a long time over these fish. I knew they were good, but I did not think they were so good as they turned out to be. The first to be hooked and netted was a lusty pounder. The second also was a pounder, and so was the third. For from that small space I took these three trout and lost several others equally desirable. Was I pleased with myself? Did I feel like dancing? I stuck to that spot long after I had exhausted its possibilities, but I was fascinated by these persistent risers.

Further down the river was a pool of an entirely different type. All down the far bank willow bushes trailed their branches in the water, providing shelter and safety for the fish. The pool was very narrow, with a fast current, the surface being smooth. This was ideal dry-fly water. There were no eddies to put that fatal drag on the fly. The feeding stations of the fish were just beside the bushes, and whenever a trout was hooked it immediately tried to get under a bush. Not a few succeeded. The trout here, however, were smaller than in the former pool—being typical Leader-fish of from 4 oz. to 6 oz.

As the day wore on it became hotter and hotter. The sun shone straight downstream. As a general rule this is fatal to sport, especially with the fly. But on that strange day the trout kept on rising. How delightful it was to wander about the river. Interest never slackened, taking a cast here and there wherever fish were showing. Hundreds of trout rose to the Red Quill, many were hooked and many escaped. My diary tells me that I stopped fishing at four o'clock, although the trout were still rising.

The pleasures of the day, however, had not ended. On the way back to the village I met two local anglers who were on their way to the river. They asked if I had any sport. Now I didn't know whether my catch was an ordinary catch or not, and I remarked that I had caught a good few, including three fish of a pound apiece. They immediately demanded to see my basket. They seemed to be astonished. When I got home I found I had kept just over two dozen trout weighing 9 lbs. in all. I put the three-pounders into a parcel and took them to the post office. The postmaster, who was also secretary of the local fishing club, asked how I had fared. I said I had got 9 lbs. He smiled as he weighed the parcel and said significantly: "Three pounds!"

"Do you know how many trout are in that parcel?" I asked.

"Twelve," he said promptly. "Our Leader trout average $\frac{1}{4}$ lb."

"Three," I said.

The postmaster told me afterwards that he had not believed me—and that was obvious enough. But later he had learned from the anglers whom I had met that what I had said was true. Could there be a better ending to a day than that?

CHAPTER IV

BALANCE IN THE SPINNING OUTFIT

JUDGING from the equipment which one too often sees in use, a very considerable number of anglers who have taken to spinning for salmon do not realise the importance of having a properly-balanced outfit. In fly-fishing great stress is laid on seeing that the weight of the line is suited to the rod. And, indeed, it is impossible to cast satisfactorily if the line is either too heavy or too light in relation to the rod's action and "lifting" qualities.

Actually in spinning the relationship between rod and line is equally important, not, however, for the purpose of casting. A lure can be cast just as far, and possibly farther, with a heavy, stiff rod than with a light rod with a medium action, whether the line have a breaking strain of 20 lb. or 10 lb., always provided that the weight on the trace is suited to the weight of the line; but when the fish has been hooked it is a very different story! If a heavy, stiff rod is used in conjunction with a fine line—that is to say, a line round about 10 lb. breaking strain—the chances of a break are very considerably increased. I am assuming the use of a revolving drum spinning reel.

It might be as well to explain this in some detail. Personally, my attention was drawn to the matter in a striking way a good few years ago. I hooked a 25-lb. salmon in a flooded river on a line which broke at a subsequent test at about eight pounds. The salmon tried to get out of the stream twice and had to be held and then skull-dragged up the river away from danger.

When the fish bolted on the first occasion and I saw it was going out of the pool into very rough water, where I could not follow, I wound the line round my hand expecting a break; but the line did not break and the fish was swept round close to my bank. I was using a spinning rod with a very soft action. It was indeed a fly-rod with a shortened top, twelve feet in length. It was the rod which saved me, for it acted as a spring and absorbed, to a very considerable extent, the power and weight of the fish. If I had been using a stiff rod the line would have snapped like thread. As it happened, the rod and the line were in perfect harmony.

In selecting a spinning outfit, the factor which the angler should keep in mind is the nature of the river he intends to fish and the class of salmon which frequent it. If he is fishing a wide river, turbulent by nature when it is running full, necessitating the use of large and heavy baits, a light spinning outfit cannot be used effectively. In such conditions a fairly powerful rod is necessary, because it would be unwise to use a line in such circumstances with a breaking strain of less than 15 lb.

To cast a lure forty yards with a line of this thickness requires the use of a gross weight—that is to say, bait and anti-kink lead—of round about an ounce. To throw such a weight a fairly powerful, stiff rod is necessary; obviously a light rod could not stand up to the strain. Assuming the use of a double-handed rod—and that is desirable—made of split cane, the weight of the rod should be round about 20 oz., the length being 10 feet. Such a rod is necessary for more than casting purposes. It is necessary in playing the fish. If the fish is hooked with, say, 30 yards of line out, and takes out another thirty yards, the strain of the current on the line is very considerable, and that must be allowed for. It

should hardly be necessary to point out that the reel for use with such a rod, on a wide river—that is to say a river of not less than 50 yards in breadth—should be of ample size to take at least 120 yards of line and preferably 150 yards.

The only other circumstances in which gear of the type described is desirable is a narrow turbulent river where the banks consist often of cliffs or large boulders, where one cannot follow the fish and it may have to be held if it wants to go downstream.

If the river where one intends to fish is not too wide, say between 30 and 60 yards, and the banks are reasonably free from obstructions, it is unnecessary to use powerful gear under any circumstances. Even when the river is in flood, it is unnecessary to use a line with a breaking strain of more than 10 lb., and this in turn calls for a proportionate scaling down in the weight and action of the rod. The rod for use in such circumstances should not be stiff. It should have a medium action, because it is rarely necessary to exceed a gross weight of half an ounce, including lure and anti-kink lead. For such tackle the rod may be either single or double-handed, according to the taste of the angler. And the reel may either be of the revolving drum or the fixed spool type.

When one comes to low-water spinning, an entirely different outfit is desirable, irrespective of the width of the river. I think it is generally recognized nowadays that, in clear low-water conditions, the use of fine tackle gives the greatest success. Small baits, thin traces and thin lines are necessary, and such tackle can be used most effectively on a fixed spool reel with a slipping clutch. The line should not have a greater breaking strain than 6 lb. and need not be less, and the trace, whether of gut, gut substitute or wire, should have the

same breaking strain. The rod should be single-handed, and need not exceed 7 feet in length, and 5 or 6 ounces in weight. Such a rod and line will cast a gross weight of half an ounce, successfully and easily, up to a distance of 40 to 45 yards.

The secret of playing a large salmon on such tackle lies in the proper manipulation of the tension of the reel. The matter is, of course, controversial, but I am definitely of the opinion that the only type of reel suitable for salmon angling with the thread-line—which must not have a breaking strain exceeding 6 lb.—is the fixed spool reel. In a narrow river 80 yards of line are ample; in a wide river I never feel confident with less than 100 to 120.

For two reasons the angler should always try to use as light tackle as possible. First, he will catch more fish. Second, the strain of angling is very much less. To use a heavy outfit efficiently for six or eight hours at a stretch puts a severe strain on the muscles. Indeed, unless one is in the pink of condition, it is very tiring.

Finally, a word about lines. No matter what weight of thread-line is used, a few yards of heavier line should be placed between the fishing-line proper and the trace. A line is only as strong as its weakest part. The wear and tear of casting speedily weakens the last few yards of the spinning line. Further, the strength of the line, whether it be of silk or gut substitute, is reduced when it is wet. The angler may *think* he is using a 6-lb. line because that was the breaking strain of the line when new and dry. Actually the line, in use, has a breaking strain of between 4 and 5 lb. He must, therefore, allow for the diminution of strength by the addition of these few yards of heavier line. Finally, it is quite wrong to use a stout trace with a fine line. The trace should have the same breaking strain as the line.

CHAPTER V

SALMON ON THE 6-LB. LINE

I WAS particularly interested in Colonel ——'s letter describing the difficulties he had in killing a salmon when spinning with the 6-lb. line. Other anglers, as I know from letters which I receive from time to time, have similar experiences. The following observations, therefore, may be useful.

The first thing the angler has to do when he goes on to the thread-line game—and by thread-line I mean a line with a breaking strain not exceeding 6 lb.—is to forget all about the ordinary spinning equipment and the revolving drum reel. He must forget about fighting a salmon by applying as heavy a strain as he can. The essence of thread-line fishing is to make the salmon kill itself, and that, as a general rule, it does quickly. There are, of course, fish which are so dour that they refuse to do anything but sulk or swim slowly round about. Fortunately these fish, so far as the light equipment is concerned, are exceptional, provided the angler uses correct tactics.

Obviously it is futile to try to kill a salmon quickly by applying pressure through a 6-lb. line and a rod weighing less than 6 oz. The maximum strain which the angler can put on the fish, with such equipment, is negligible—I am referring to salmon of from 15 to 25 lb. in weight.

The usual effect of applying pressure is to make the fish stubborn. That is not what the angler wants to do at all. His aim should be to irritate it, to make it scared or angry so that it keeps rushing about. To

that end not the maximum but the minimum strain should be applied, and it should not be applied through the tension adjuster of the reel but through the use of the finger on the drum.

So far as I can discover the slipping clutch arrangement of the fixed spool reel is too often not properly understood. Its true purpose is to enable various strengths of the line to be used on the same reel with safety. Actually only two tensions are necessary—a full tension in which it is impossible to pull line from the drum without breaking it, and no tension at all. The full tension is used while fishing before the salmon is hooked. Its purpose is merely to ensure that the hook penetrates beyond the barb. Immediately the hook has been hooked the tension adjuster should be pushed round to the “off” as far as it will go. This means that nothing which the fish can do can break the line, because the tension on the reel is so light that the slightest movement of the fish pulls the line from the drum. This forms a vast reserve of strength—a guarantee of security if the fish leaps, bolts, hits the line with its tail, and so on.

When the angler attempts to play a salmon for the first time on the no-strain method, he feels completely helpless. If he attempts to put any strain on the fish through the reel, he feels nothing at all. If he tries to get the fish across the river by turning the handle of the reel, nothing happens. Nothing could happen because the weight of the salmon is too much for the tension of the reel. All that happens when the angler turns the handle is that he hears, or should hear (if the reel is efficient), the noise of the ratchet. Whenever he hears that noise it means one of ^{two} things—either the salmon is taking line or is lying still. If it is taking line the angler must allow it to go. While it is lying “doggo” he applies just the slightest pressure on the drum of the

reel by placing the tip of his forefinger on it. The purpose of this is not to apply any pressure to the fish, but to prevent slackness coming into the line (and so permitting the line to be entangled in the "works" of the reel), and also to enable him to tell precisely what the fish is doing. For example, if the fish is lying at the other side of a heavy current and a considerable length of line is in the water, the force of the current on the line, or a bit, of weed, or other debris pressing against the line, may cause it to be pulled from the drum although the fish is lying still. For that reason the angler should, while a fish is running, keep moving towards it in order not to give a foot more line that he can help and also to keep as much of the line as possible in the air. Not more than a few yards of line should ever be in the water.

Naturally, the angler says, "But if there is no tension on the reel, how on earth can I control the movements of the salmon. It simply does what it likes." That is a complete delusion, and whenever an angler says that it shows that he has not mastered the reel or understood the method. Of course, if by "control" the angler means putting such a pressure on the fish that he can prevent it from running, I agree that it is impossible to control it. Heavy tackle is necessary to control a salmon in that fashion; but if the tackle is heavy enough to stop a salmon from running, why bother to play it at all? What is wanted is to make it fight the stream, to keep it away from danger spots and to make it exhaust itself quickly. I suggest that that is controlling a salmon. It must be obvious that if the angler stands still and does nothing but let the fish run about, he cannot hope to influence the movements of the fish.

The most important thing in playing a salmon on the thread-line is the position the angler takes up in relation to the fish. He should always endeavour to keep just

below it so that the fish works up the river. If the fish gets well below the angler he should take a few steps towards it, slackening the line. This causes the fish to "stay put." The angler then may do one of two things. If his own movements are unrestricted he can walk down past the fish holding the rod high, without strain, reeling up as he goes. If he cannot get below the fish, he must "walk" the fish by well-known and simple device of covering the reel with the hand, applying a firm pressure, and walking slowly and steadily up the river. As a general rule the fish will follow "like a sheep." Sometimes the salmon will follow for 20 or 30 yards before it objects. When it refuses to come any farther the angler lifts his finger from the drum and walks below the fish, reeling up as previously described. When he gets below the fish a sharp strain usually causes the fish to run upstream. Very often, as a result of the salmon's tendency to run away from the strain, the fish will move to the other side of the river. There is no danger in its doing so—I have had them as far as 90 yards away in a broad river. They are brought back to the angler's side by the process of walking away from the river. It is the principle of walking a fish already described, but instead of the angler moving up the river he moves away from it.

From what I have said it follows that the thread-line is restricted in its usefulness. It cannot be safely used in places where the angler's movements are cribbed, cabined, and confined. It is not suitable where the river bed contains many obstructions. It is not suitable for fishing in large rivers in flooded water. It is a low water game because in such conditions the salmon does not like to leave the pool in which it has been hooked, although, when it has been exhausted, the current may carry it down the river. When this happens the angler

walks down with it reeling up and at the same time pulling it into the side. At no time, from the moment the salmon is hooked until the moment it is tailed or gaffed should tension be put on the reel. Only the finger brake should be used. Some anglers put on the tension after the fish has been exhausted or before gaffing it. I think this is a mistake because if a fish starts plunging under the tip of the rod a break might easily happen.

CHAPTER VI

FLIES : THEIR NUMBER IS LEGION BUT THEIR USE—!

LOOKING through a fishing tackle catalogue I find mentioned over 200 different kinds of wet fly and some 250 different patterns of dry fly and, believe me, this does nearly exhaust the flies which have been "invented," to bring grist to the angler's (or tackle merchant's) mill. In fact, unless one has a sense of humour, the list of trout flies of one kind or another becomes a positive nightmare. A few seasons ago, I remember, there swam over the horizon a new fly which was the daddy of them all. I forget what they called it and have only a hazy notion of what it was like, but I remember getting some. It was much cracked-up. It killed when no other fly would kill. It was a wet fly, and nobody knew what the trout took it for, but they snapped it up. Nothing is heard of that fly to-day for the good and simple reason that the claims made for it were preposterous. What had really happened was what happens often—the angler using this fly had a lucky break. He caught lots of trout with it and promptly

said "This is the medicine to give them." I have an idea that trout flies are like salmon flies—the oftener they are used, to the exclusion of other flies, the more fish they catch and so they achieve celebrity, only partially deserved.

It frequently happens, of course, that trout will take only one particular fly on a cast of three or four, or one particular kind of dry fly—but that is because they happen to be feeding on something that resembles that kind of particular fly. This may go on for quite a time, but it would be absurd to make extravagant claims for that particular kind of fly. The most remarkable instance of trout refusing all flies, save one, was reported to me some years ago by an angler who had been fishing for sea trout. The river was full of fish, but he could not get them to take any of the regular flies. Now, he had in his book that curious American confection known as the *Permachenee Belle*. In spite of the protests of his ghillie, who said the fly would chase all the fish out of the pool, he attached Belle to his cast. Now this Belle is a perfect Amazon of a fly. She has white wings with a broad crimson strip down the centre of each and a flaming red tail. Yet these sea trout gobbled up this fly in the most astounding way. The angler thought he had made a great discovery and on many subsequent occasions tried Belle, on the same river, without so much as getting a "pluck!"

How are we to account for such experiences? There is no accounting for them! One can only theorise, and the only reason I can think of for the strange predilection of these sea trout on that occasion was that they had recently been feeding in the sea on something which Belle reminded them of!

Far fetched? Possibly, but not fetched so far as a salmon angling theory which I read recently in a sober magazine.

The "inventor" of the theory—he claimed to have

proved its soundness—is that one has only to discover what salmon were feeding on before they left the sea and one will be able to “clean the river.” Simple—ingenious. There is, however, one flaw. How, in the name of heaven, is one to discover what the salmon were feeding on before they left the sea? But that is a digression—a mere by-the-way.

What I really wanted to write about was this infernal horde of flies set buzzing about the angler's ears, to his confusion and impoverishment. Some anglers—probably most anglers—lay in a large store of flies. Before they go fishing they are assailed with a horrible doubt—in all their flies is there not lacking the fly on which the trout will be feeding? In imagination they see themselves confronted with a mad rise of fish which they cannot catch. They see themselves trying fly after fly, without result. With a shudder they go to the tackle shop and fill up blanks in their collection. Some anglers I know have hundreds of flies, most of which have never even been in the water and never will be. The probability—nay, the certainty is, that they do not use more than a dozen patterns in the course of a season! Myself, I would not suffer undue qualms if, in the matter of dry flies, I were limited to one pattern only for the whole season, and would be quite happy with half-a-dozen patterns of wet flies. One angler I knew used one dry fly, and one only, a Greenwell's Glory—year in year out. He had it in different sizes to suit the conditions and he caught lots of trout. But it would not be a Greenwell's Glory I would select, because, personally, I have little use for winged dry flies. The fly of my choice would be a modified Blue Hen. I say modified because the original Blue Hen was a wet fly and was made from the soft feather from under the wing of a water hen.

But my Blue Hen, being a dry fly, requires a harder

feather. It is found on the neck of the Andalusian cock, and is of a bluey-grey colour. One of these hackles is wound round a hook. One or two fibres are attached by way of a tail and the body is silk thread of a dirty yellow colour. What fly could be simpler, or less pretentious? But I will guarantee that it will kill as many trout as any other more elaborate confections and more than most. Of course, you use it of a size suitable to the conditions.

A French correspondent, M. Constantin-Weyer, wrote to me: "Your blue hen dressed with yellow silk is exactly *Heptagenia Sulphurea* a fly which, in France at least, is often found on broken, swift-flowing streams. It comes from one of the flat, side-swimming larvæ."

Now, it will be noticed that the Blue Hen which I have described has no wings. It is a hackle fly, or spider, as we call it in Scotland. The fact that it is wingless gives a number of advantages. It lands more lightly on the water and floats down more jauntily than a winged fly does. Moreover, it always falls right-side up and does not flop over on its side as so many winged flies do. In fact, I am puzzled to know why anglers use winged flies at all! They are quite unnecessary and they merely complicate the business of fly dressing. Above all, I cannot understand why most fly dressers—I mean professionals—put double wings on dry flies. They say that double wings make the fly float better, but that is all in my eye and Betty Martin!

What usually does happen is that after the flies have been a short time in use the double wings, which look so beautiful when they are lying in the case, disintegrate and become a brush-like mass of fibres. This is because the cunning, but foolish fly maker, has trimmed the wings nicely into shape with a pair of scissors. If you must have wings on a fly do not trim them with scissors and only use two or three fibres.

So much for dry flies. Now let us consider the sunk variety. A great deal is being said nowadays about nymphs, as if they were something new. Actually, nymphs were used nearly a century ago. W. C. Stewart's flies are all nymphs, although that fact may have been accidental. Stewart was no believer in the exact imitation. "It has been proved beyond doubt," he wrote, "that a black, a brown, a red, and a dun coloured fly, used together and varied in size according to circumstances, will, at any time, kill as well, and even better, than most elaborate collections arranged for every month in the year. If trout are at all inclined to rise, one or other of the above will be found inviting."

Thus, in his directions for dressing the most "killing flies" Stewart put first in his short list of six flies—three spiders, the black, the red, and the dun. His other three flies are winged flies, but it would not be difficult to get the same colour effect by means of hackles. Stewart says "An immense number of killing flies may be made by varying the wings and body, but nothing is gained by extending the number beyond those just mentioned, and we do not believe six more killing imitations can be manufactured." These words were written in 1857; they apply with equal force in 1943, but if I were a betting man I would wager long odds that not one angler in a hundred would have the courage to limit his collections of artificial wet flies to Stewart's six!

What I have said about river flies applies with equal force to loch flies. There are hundreds of different kinds of loch flies—positively hundreds, hundreds too many. This loch-fly business is an absolute ramp, for the joke is that when the trout is taking, it will, usually, be found that they are not particular as to the pattern of fly offered!

No doubt most anglers feel as I do when confronted with the masses of flies which one finds in tackle shops—

somewhat confused. I found myself recently gazing at some cases of flies, the cases being filled with an infinity of small boxes, each one of which was packed with supplies for the coming season. I asked the salesman how many flies were in the cases, and he replied casually, "20,000 or so." Not many when you say it quick. I did not dare to ask how many different kinds of flies there were for fear he would say, "25,000 or so," with the same casualness.

But we put our heads together in order to find out what are the most popular types of fly. We found that mallard feathers carried off the honours with sixteen different varieties; woodcocks were second with thirteen; there were twelve different kinds of tealwings; and eight grouses. There were seven different kinds of March Brown and five Butchers.

Here is the list of mallards :—

Mallard and yellow	Mallard and orange
Mallard and red	Mallard and green
Mallard and amber	Mallard and grey
Mallard and blue	Mallard and silver
Mallard and brown	Mallard and silver and blue
Mallard and black	Mallard and silver and orange
Mallard and claret	Mallard and silver and red
Mallard and olive	Mallard and white

Here are the woodcocks :—

Woodcock and hare lug	Woodcock and gold
Woodcock and yellow	Malloch's favourite (2)
Woodcock and green	Hardy's favourite
Woodcock and red	Oak fly and yellow
Woodcock and black	Oak fly and orange
Woodcock and mixed	Alder
Woodcock and quill (2)	

The teals :—

Teal and red	Teal silver and blue
Teal and black	Teal silver and red
Teal and yellow	Teal silver and black
Teal and green	Teal and gold
Teal and mixed	Peter Ross
Teal and orange	Maggie Ross

The grouses :—

Grouse and claret
 Grouse and green
 Grouse and yellow
 Grouse and orange

Grouse and purple
 Grouse and mixed
 Grouse and gold
 Governor

The March Browns :—

March Brown male
 March Brown female
 March Brown and silver
 March Brown and gold

March Brown and quill
 Sam Slick
 Brown Nymph

The Butchers :—

Butcher, silver
 Butcher, gold
 Butcher, split wing

Butcher, " B " (2)
 Butcher, kingfisher

CHAPTER VII

RIVER WATCHERS AT WORK

NO doubt people who know nothing about it think that the river watcher, vulgarly known as the " by-lie," has a lovely time. I used to think so myself until I got to know better. It seemed to me that it must be fine to be out by the river night and day, to see wild nature, and to get an insight into the ways of the fish poacher.

But there is another side to the picture. Poachers do most of their poaching in the long, dark winter nights, when it is very cold, and sometimes very wet ; when the snow is on the ground, or it has turned to slush in the thaw. Nice job the " bylie " has then, hasn't he ? It must be glorious to have to lie up amongst wet bushes for hours at a stretch hardly daring to move, not able to smoke in case the glow should reveal his unwelcome presence. Fine, isn't it, to spend the night in this way, night after night this way, and to find after all that the

poachers don't turn up at the expected place, and to reflect that probably they had had the river to themselves half a mile or so up or down stream. 'Oh, yes! It must be fine.

I should say at a venture the river watcher is about ten times as unpopular as the policeman, and that means a lot. The compliments doled out to the "bylie" in country places are few and far between. Because he is feared he is hated. If he isn't hated it means usually that he isn't doing his job properly. A man can't keep poachers off the river and be liked for it.

Taken over all, the poacher has the better of it. There are many poachers, and the watchers are few. There are many people, too, only too willing to get a salmon on the cheap and say nothing about it. The salmon is usually out of condition. Ten to one it has been taken off the redds in the very act of spawning, or it is a kelt and about as useful for food as putty. That doesn't matter. The buyer doesn't know, and be sure the seller doesn't tell him (or more often her).

The poacher is cunning, so that if he wants to catch him the "bylie" must be more cunning still. He has to be as careful in his movements as a fox. A dozen eyes are on him wherever he goes, and his comings and goings are promptly reported to the fish-snatchers. The only advantage the watcher has lies in the fact that the favourite poaching places are known to him. Not every part of a river is suitable for poaching. But when the poachers go a-poaching they set their spies, and it is often impossible for the river watchers to get near without being seen. Then their work goes for nothing. Often, also, when they get a capture they have the mortification of seeing the villain of the piece get off with a light fine—a fine which could be paid many times over out of the proceeds of a couple of hours on the redds.

I have come a good deal in contact with river watchers,

and have learned to have the greatest respect for their work, which is too poorly paid. That is by the way, however. What I want to give is two examples which show them at work. Take the following actual incident. Fish were running, and two watchers decided to spend the night at a particular salmon ladder. Poachers have a fondness for salmon ladders, where it is easy to snatch fish running up. The chief difficulty of making a capture at this particular ladder lay in the fact that watching the watchers is also easy. Long before the watchers get to the scene of action, the poachers have been warned and have decamped.

But in this case the watchers took up a position close to the ladder somewhere round about midnight. It was dark. It was wet. It was cold. In short, it was a beast of a night. In order to conceal themselves from the spies the watchers cut some whin bushes and lay down under them. They lay thus for several hours, virtually without moving. They were wet to the skin and suffering from cold, but they stuck it. Daylight came, but there was no sign of a poacher. They were just about to give it up and go home when they heard somebody scrambling along the bank. A poacher had arrived. He wasted no time, either, in getting to work. Neither did the watchers. The poacher had hardly settled down to the job in hand when the watchers pounced on him. The water was running out of their boots; they were shivering with cold, yet the fact that they had made a capture made them forget their misery. Telling me about it afterwards one of them said: "Oh, aye, watching's great sport!"

The second example didn't have such a happy ending, from the watchers' point of view. The poachers they were after were not "anglers" but fishermen who worked with boats and nets in an estuary. The watchers took

up their position about 10 p.m. on a bleak shore without a particle of shelter. The place was swept by the wind, and it was bitterly cold. However, they could see the poachers at work in the moonlight. They were getting salmon, too. After several hours the poachers decided they had done enough, so they took in their nets and got out their oars. The watchers got ready to spring out as the poachers came ashore. There was every prospect of a fine capture. But, unfortunately, the poachers turned their boats and landed on the opposite shore! To get to their homes the watchers had to walk miles! Oh, yes, river watching's a lovely job!

CHAPTER VIII

A NIGHT ON THE TAY

HERE is a plain, unvarnished account of a night and early morning's fishing on the upper reaches of the River Tay. My intention was to fish the minnow in the early evening, the dry fly when the rise came on and while the light lasted, the wet fly in the mirk, then to sleep for a couple of hours in the car, fish the clear water worm in the early hours of the morning, finish up with the minnow between seven and nine and then home.

Now, in angling matters, I am possessed of a devil who compels me to leave nothing to chance. Thus, when I left home, anyone looking into the car would have thought that I was away for a month instead of a round of the clock. As an awful example to others, I give a list of the articles stowed away in the car and the reasons therefor:

- (1) A fly rod.
- (2) A spare fly rod.

- (3) A spinning rod.
- (4) A spare spinning rod.
- (5) A 14-ft. worming rod ; a thread line worming ditto.
- (6) A fly reel.
- (7) Spare fly reel.
- (8) A thread-line reel.
- (9) Spare thread-line reel.
- (10) A landing net.
- (11) Spare landing net.
- (12) A tin of worms.
- (13) A tin of preserved minnows.
- (14) Three minnow traps and bait.
- (15) A pair of wading trousers.
- (16) A pair of thigh waders in case I should sit down in the water and require a change.
- (17) A five-gallon empty milk tin in case I have to cart live minnows when caught to a convenient spot.
- (18) A complete change of clothing in case I should get "soaked to the skin."
- (19) A short waterproof jacket for wearing with trousers.
- (20) A long waterproof jacket for wearing with "stockings."
- (21) Three parcels, each distinctly marked "tea," "supper," and "breakfast."
- (22) A bundle of sticks to make a breakfast fire.
- (23) A pan in which to boil eggs.
- (24) A heavy overcoat.
- (25) A bottle of midge lotion.
- (26) A large bottle of water.
- (27) Etceteras.

I abase myself. I hold myself up to public ridicule. I may say at once that no accidents occurred—they rarely do. I did not break a rod, lose a landing net, have trouble with a reel, or tumble into the water.

When it came to the bit I did not light a fire. I did not use the 14-ft. rod. I did not require the five-gallon milk can. I only ate half of the food I took with me; in short, if I had cut out all the "spares" I would not have been inconvenienced in any way.

Next time I am resolved "bare necessities" will be the order of the day; but I am quite certain that when "the next time" comes the devil will assert himself. Nay, the load will be increased by a 16-ft. rod to be used for dapping the clear-water worm, a new idea with which I have become seized as a result of early morning experiences.

I reached the Tay about five o'clock on a bright, warm afternoon—to wit, Saturday, June 26th. The river was, as I hoped it would be, small and clear. I mounted a minnow rod, went down to the river, caught and selected some minnows, and without loss of time fished over a few hundred yards of good water. The trout were interested in the minnow, but they were by no means greedy on it. That means that I had a good many offers, but few fish were netted—or rather drawn on to the gravel, for I rarely use the net in minnow fishing except for fish over 1 lb. in weight.

I stopped minnow fishing about nine and hurried back to the car because I wanted to be at the water "ready for the fray" before ten o'clock. I had mapped out the "plan of campaign." I was going to wade up the centre of a broad shallow pool which is lined with trees on both banks. When I was in the water, however, I found I would have to alter the plan. A wind had sprung up and was blowing right down this pool, and a wind at night is bad. After a fruitless half hour I went downstream to a long, narrow, deep pool, but there was no escaping the wind.

About half past ten a few night flies began to appear and an odd trout commenced to rise. Although I was

fishing into the light (as one should at night) there was a glare on the water which made it difficult to see the floating fly. I therefore changed from a Blae Spider to a large Light Partridge with yellow hackle. This fly was more easily seen. One or two trout splashed at but did not take it. I hooked a trout when an eddy had drawn the fly under the water, but this fish, which was a good one, got off. Nothing happened after that until I deliberately jerked the fly beneath the surface. I immediately hooked a half-pounder which was duly landed. The expedient repeated produced another offer, and I immediately came to the conclusion that the sunk fly would pay better than the floater. I accordingly changed over to a cast of night flies—Partridge Tail, Pheasant Back, and Green Drake. The change was not profitable and I fished halfway down the pool—which is 150 yards or thereabouts in length—before I raised a fish. This was duly netted.

It was now eleven o'clock and the "rise" should have been on. I went down to the tail of the pool—the best part at night, but very few trout were moving. At half-past eleven I began to fear that there was not going to be a rise. By midnight I was certain of it, so I went back to the car to get a few hours' sleep.

During the night—or rather early morning—when I lay sleepless in the car the wind started to blow strongly. I dozed off and woke with a start, feeling very stiff. After some coffee I felt better. The wind was still far too strong and it was cold. The prospects of a successful morning with the clear-water worm were as bad as could be. However, I was determined to fish the worm and I wrestled with the wind for the next two hours without catching a single trout. At last I gave it up and went on to the minnow. But the trout were not interested in the minnow and I got very few fish with it. At last,

however, I hooked a decent trout which fought magnificently. It was so strong that I was certain that I would lose it. I didn't, however, and it turned out to be the best fish that I had— $1\frac{1}{4}$ lb.

I stopped fishing then. I was thoroughly fed up. When I got home I found I had caught sixteen trout—weighing 7 lb.—which wasn't so bad after all. On the way home—and I did enjoy the run through the Sma' Glen in the glorious sunshine—it occurred to me that if I had dapped the clear water worm with a long rod and a blowline I might have got some trout. The idea strikes me as being so good that I have since got a 16-ft. rod suitable for the method and I mean to try it on the first opportunity.

That is why I said that the load in the car will be increased next time!

CHAPTER IX

DO SALMON PREFER BLONDES?

THERE is a question which I have been asking myself for some years without ever having discovered the answer. It is—Why are women so extraordinarily lucky when salmon fishing? Consider the facts. The heaviest fully authenticated salmon ever killed in Scotland on rod and line was caught by a woman on the Tay in 1922. It weighed 64 lb. It is true that two fish of greater weight figure in the register of big fish, but, while they *may* have existed, they are somewhat shadowy. The largest weighed $69\frac{3}{4}$ lb. It was said to have been killed by the Earl of Home on the Tweed more than two centuries ago. The other, a fish

of 67 lb., is said to have been killed by Jock Wallace, a poacher, on the Nith in 1812. Most people, I fancy, give the Tay lady the honour because there is no doubt about *her* fish.

Not only did a woman catch Scotland's heaviest salmon, but to another woman must go the credit of having killed the second heaviest fish. This salmon appears in the records as a fish of 61 lb., and was killed in October, 1924, on the Deveron. Now, in the records there is a fish of 61½ lb., killed on the Tay below Perth in October, 1907. This stands as Scotland's second best, but there can be no doubt that the Deveron fish was heavier because it was not weighed for 24 hours after it was caught, and it certainly lost by shrinkage, evaporation and loss of blood, more than half a pound. A little further down the list we came upon a salmon of 59½ lb. This salmon was killed on the Wye by a lady in March, 1923. It is the record spring fish for Great Britain. Next we have a fish of 55 lb. killed in the Awe in September, 1927. This was killed by a woman and was the fish of the year.

But to come to still more recent history. The best catch of salmon made in 1936 went to the credit of a woman. Fishing the Tweed on March 6th, Lady Muriel Liddel-Grainger caught twenty-five spring salmon, weighing 219 lb.; a great catch. But it was beaten by Lady Joan Joicey, who, on the same beat—although from the opposite bank of the river—on February 15th killed twenty-six salmon and two sea-trout. The average weight of her fish was 9.653 lb., the heaviest being 18 lb., the smallest 7 lb.

These are phenomenal achievements, for it must be kept in mind that they were made in the early spring when kelts are numerous. I do not know the total number of fish *landed* by Lady Liddell-Grainger, but

Lady Joicey's total was thirty-four; in all she hooked and ran forty. February days are short, and, assuming that Lady Joicey's day did not exceed seven hours—and it cannot have been much more at that time of the year—it means that she landed roughly five fish per hour. This would work out—allowing for the other fish which were hooked and lost—an average of probably not more than nine minutes per fish.

The question naturally arises—How was it done? I am told that Lady Joicey realised very early in the day that there was a chance of her making a record catch, and she set out to do it. When she was playing one fish, another rod was got ready for her so that there should be no loss of time in mounting fresh baits (she was spinning). No doubt many anglers will snort at such a method of angling on the ground that it resembles a relay race rather than the pastime of angling. On the other hand, it is quite a regular practice for wealthy salmon anglers to make their ghillies do all the donkey work, such as mounting baits. It is even on record that a noble lord, having hooked his salmon, handed the rod over to his ghillie and made him play the fish! Whatever one's opinion might be about such things, the facts are that Lady Joicey hooked, played and landed on her own rod, or rods, in one day's fishing, twenty-six salmon and two sea-trout.

And that brings me back to my starting-point—how on earth do they manage it? I think I am safe in saying that for every female salmon angler there is a score of male anglers; and yet—numbers being kept in mind—the women carry off most of the prizes. Any idea that it is superior skill can be dismissed with an appropriate snort. Given that the angler, whether male or female, can cast a lure and manage it properly, the rest is luck—the luck to come across an outsize salmon in a taking

mood, the luck to find a pool full of salmon, also in the taking mood, and the conditions just right. Lady Liddell-Grainger and Lady Joicey were fortunate enough to get the time, and the place, and the loved ones together, and made the most of it. Similarly Miss G. W. Ballantine—who caught the 64-pounder on the Tay—was lucky enough towards the end of the last day of the season to have her bait brought across the nose of that goliath among salmon, and to find it ready for a bite. Just consider the stamina required to play and land a monster of this kind, even allowing for the fact that a boat was at hand for getting in and out of as circumstances required. Consider also the excitement, but here is the lady's own story, written by her own hand and sent to me by Mr. A. P. Lyle, the Laird of Glendelvine, where the fish was caught :

"The fish was hooked well out in the Boat Pool in the stream above the Bargie Stone, and after a few seconds of very ordinary play we decided to land him at the broken bank behind Bargie, on the Murthly side, the slack water there being an advantage.

"But the fish's plans and ours did not coincide. Whir-r-r! An alarming amount of line was torn off. The reel screeched as it had never screeched before. The fish careered madly downstream, leaving only a whirl of spray in its train. Within the fraction of a second the boat was turned, heading downstream, and down, down, following hard on the heels of the fish, we were compelled to go.

"After this first furious rush—about 500 yards—he lost his bearings, and came to a sudden halt close to the north bank and about 100 yards above the bridge. By that time, however, I had retrieved all the slack line, and had him well under hand, though my arm ached desperately and my left forefinger was cut in an effort

to check the line. Here we were in the act of landing, when the fish rolled in to the end of the boat, thus offering an opportunity for gaffing. Had a third party been at hand to hold the boat the fish undoubtedly would have been gaffed in the space of ten minutes.

"Without delay he righted himself and sailed off majestically into the deep, ever after that showing a marked disinclination to come to close quarters. He again elected to go downstream, and ran out in a line with the north pier of the bridge.

"A moment of frightful anxiety followed when he threatened to go through between the piers. But he chose to favour us, and the bridge was safely negotiated.

"We were now out of the boat, and following the fish, he meanwhile keeping about twenty yards from the bank, but showing a tendency to get farther out into the current.

"Twilight was fading fast, so father (who was boatman) thought it wise to run back and fetch the boat, while I hung on to the 'refractory beast,' which kept advancing and retiring at intervals, but inclining always downstream.

"Again boarding the boat, we endeavoured to get round to his other side, but that seemed only to spur him on to further effort, and though we worked with him for fully half an hour in mid-stream, he showed no signs of weariness. Then he settled down to intervals of sulking, giving an occasional dive and shake of his head. This period was a steady, solid fight for victory between 'man' and monster.

"I suggested pelting him with the stones in the boat, but got short cuttings—'Na, na, we'll try nane o' thae capers!' Eventually we manœuvred him to the opposite side, where, in the darkness, the trees of the island stood silhouetted against the sky, and where it now seemed as if we were destined to spend the night.

“ Though utterly exhausted, sheer determination kept me from giving up the rod, as tighter and tighter still came the order, and nearer and nearer came our quarry. By changing my seat to the bow of the boat and keeping the rod in an upright position, father was enabled to feel with the gaff the knot at the junction of line and cast. Gauging the distance by the length of the cast ($3\frac{3}{4}$ yards), the stroke was delivered, and a wriggling monster was heaved over the seat into the floor of the boat, vigorously flapping his tail.

“ He was hooked half a mile farther up the river at 6.15 ; it was now 8.20 ; two hours and five minutes of nerve-racking anxiety, thrilling excitement, and good, stiff work. One thing was decidedly in our favour : we were mercifully ignorant of the size of the fish. From start to finish he never showed himself above the surface. That he was hefty we could well judge from his weight and movements, but nothing more than 35 to 40 lb. was anticipated.

“ He proved to be the heaviest fish of the season, the fish of many seasons, the record for the British Isles.

“ As we had no spring balance capable of coping with the fish's weight, two passers-by were hailed to carry the ‘ beast ’ slung on a pole, to Boatlands Farm, where, in the presence of a number of people, it was carefully weighed on a tested steelyard, half an hour after capture. Though slightly copper coloured, the fish was in good condition and fresh run, as sea lice were found still adhering to its tail. It was gifted to Perth Royal Infirmary by Mr. Lyle, where it was relished by both patients and staff.”

Please, will someone answer my question : Why are women so extraordinarily lucky when salmon fishing ?

CHAPTER X

TROUT POACHING IN SCOTLAND

A PRE-WAR survey of the "open" rivers of Scotland revealed how angling suffers from the depredations of poachers. These gentry are a thorn in the flesh of the management committees of angling associations, particularly when they control rivers which are frequented by salmon and sea trout.

Almost without exception, club regulations contain provisions directed expressly against poachers. Detection means loss of membership for the remainder of the season, or even permanent exclusion from the club. Members are encouraged to "lay evidence," and if capture and conviction follows, they are rewarded in cash. In one Border club, any person convicted of any kind of illegal fishing, in any water whatsoever, is permanently excluded from the club.

Invariably there is a prohibition of the sale of fish—a rule which is directed against the poacher as well as the "fish hog." Most poachers poach because there is a ready market, and a good price, for poached fish. This has led ardent anglers to urge that the sale of river trout, as distinct from sea-trout, should be prohibited.

In these democratic days such a prohibition is impracticable. In the first place, to be effective it would require to be universal in the United Kingdom. The sale of trout would have to be prohibited in England and Ireland as well as in Scotland. Since each of these countries has its own fishery laws it would be very difficult to secure the necessary uniformity of legislation. It is doubtful if any of the Governments concerned

would give the necessary time to a highly controversial issue, especially as the remedy lies largely in the hands of anglers themselves.

There is a further difficulty. Commercial fish hatcheries are entitled to sell trout for consumption. How is it possible to safeguard their interests under a general prohibition without opening the door to the poacher? The best that the Scottish Anglers' Federation has been able to secure after much agitation is a law prohibiting the sale of trout under eight inches in length. Whether that safeguard has really done much good it is impossible to say. A passage in a report of the United Clyde Angling Protective Association speaks for itself. It is as follows :—

“ There is evidence that, especially during the low waters of late May and June, the poacher got an excellent chance to carry on his dirty work. There is something wrong when a few mean-spirited people should be able, with impunity, to spoil the sport of the many hundreds, or even thousands, of working-men anglers who fish the only really free water in this part of the country.

“ Your committee recognise that it is one of their chief duties to do everything possible to prevent the poaching of trout, and they, therefore, confidently appeal to those fair fishers who know any of the netters, to furnish to the Association, anonymously or otherwise, any accurate information which may help to stop the depletion of the river by unfair means.”

Some clubs seek to circumvent the netters by putting stakes, boulders, and other obstructions into those pools which are capable of being netted. The device

should be adopted more extensively. Indeed, by the intelligent use of obstructions, poaching by net could be made wellnigh impossible, and the river improved at the same time by providing more shelter for the fish and breaking up the current, thereby creating greater aeration of the water and so combating pollution.

Netting, which is the form of poaching which does most damage, is almost invariably done during the night or in the early morning. For that reason, the restriction of night fishing, which most angling club rules impose on members, is of doubtful wisdom. It is no bad thing to have "honest anglers" on the river when netters are most likely to be active. The idea that trout are easily caught at night by a rod and line, and that night fishing must, therefore, be curbed, is quite illusory.

In any case, even if every angler could be certain of catching a dozen trout every night he spent on the river, the damage done to the stock of fish in the river would be negligible, compared with the injury caused by netting. A few draws of a net through a pool will practically empty it for the remainder of the season at least. Netting does more damage to a river than any other method of taking fish, legal or illegal.

Complaint is sometimes made about maggot-fishing at night. When the method of garnishing each fly on the cast with a maggot first became popular, alarm was expressed that it was far too deadly and would empty the rivers. Deadly it was—at first. But the trout quickly became "educated" to the fact that the seductive maggot concealed a sharp hook! Of course, the maggot still kills good baskets, but the circumstances have to be very favourable. Taking it all over, it is doubtful if maggot-fishing does much damage. My own view is that prohibition would be futile, because it would not be observed. The average club member is

still a long distance from that altruism which views the trout through the glasses of absolute sportsmanship.

Salmon roe-fishing in clear water will sometimes kill a good many trout, but only the expert can practise this dodge—and experts are few in number. Much more damage is done by roe-fishing during floods, especially in the back-end. The use of roe is, of course, illegal. Nevertheless, the "paste," as it is sometimes called, is still widely used. It would need an army of watchers to put an end to roe-fishing; for the angler who uses roe is up to all the "tricks of the trade," and it would be a very clever watcher who succeeded in catching the angler with a pot of "paste" in his possession.

The most effective remedy for roe-fishing is a shortening of the season at both ends. This is being done slowly. The enlightened angler out to improve sport knows that the season is too long, but it is not feasible to legislate in advance of general opinion. The last Trout Act shortened the season by a few weeks, making it illegal to kill trout in Scotland before March 15th, or after October 6th. We must be thankful for that, but the dates should be April 15th and September 15th. It is too much to hope for the end of August, but, generally speaking, that should be the date for brown trout.

Taking it by and large, it is at least the middle of April before trout have recovered from the effects of spawning, and by September they are only a few weeks from spawning-time. It is the height of folly to kill gravid trout, but years will have to elapse before the rank and file of anglers can be brought to look at the question in that light. There is, however, a ready solution which does not require legislation. Proprietors in leasing their waters should stipulate that trout should only be fished for when they are in condition.

CHAPTER XI

HOW SALMON POACHERS WORK

THE executive committee of associations whose rivers are frequented by salmon and sea-trout are greatly troubled by the salmon poaching problem, although nets are rarely used in association waters to catch salmon.

Generally speaking, the net-poachers devote their attention to "preserved" water. They mean business. They are not out for a solitary fish, but fish by the sackful. They require large hauls to pay for the risk, the cost of the motor car, and the price of the nets. A motor car is a necessity, and one may be sure that hired vehicles are used, because if the poachers are caught, the car as well as the nets may be confiscated.

The great opportunity for the net-poacher arrives in times of drought. When the river is low the salmon congregate in the pools. Poachers get to know very quickly when fish are to be had in numbers. As a rule, their plans are very carefully made. The river watchers and the keepers are spied upon. Their movements are known to the poachers, who when the coast is clear get to work, and all the evidence they leave are silvery scales on the bank!

Not often do the keepers get the better of the poachers, although on a Perthshire river a keeper, whose house is near the water, gave some poachers who were netting a pool the fright of their lives. It was a calm Sunday morning about two o'clock. Some unusual noises in the vicinity of the river made the keeper suspicious. Taking an electric torch, he went to see what was going on.

No doubt the poachers thought that an army of keepers was closing in on them. At any rate they fled, leaving behind them their net. It was 30 yards in length and 9 ft. in depth. They also left behind them a large sack filled with salmon, but unfortunately this was not found until some time later. The fish had to be buried.

Occasionally explosives are used in salmon poaching—a dastardly method, because it kills everything in the pool. Worse still explosives injure the fish by pulping the flesh, sometimes to the extent of making them unsaleable. But the poachers on club waters, which are mostly comparatively small rivers, employ other methods. Foul-hooking is the most popular, although the gaff is used when opportunity offers—but that is not often. The tackle usually employed for foul-hooking consists of two large single hooks tied to a stout cast, usually made of heavy gut-substitute. The hooks are lashed to the cast close to each other, tandem-wise. As much lead as is necessary to sink the hooks is quickly put on to the cast.

In all rivers there are places, usually at waterfalls or caulds, where foul-hooking presents little difficulty to the skilful. Salmon and sea-trout, when “on the run,” rest at such places, often beside ledges of rock or near the spot where they will leap to continue their passage up the river. The angler drops his hooks among the crowded fish. The lead sinks the hooks. The current carries them against the fish. A heavy jerk by the angler at the slightest stoppage drives one of the hooks over the barb. Then it is a case of getting the fish out quickly. The knowing poacher proceeds to enlarge the hole made by the hook in the body of the fish by inserting his gaff into it. He will also make a hook-hole inside the jaw of the fish. This is for the benefit of any inquisitive “bylie” who might ask awkward questions.

The watchers have a most disagreeable occupation.

The poachers are against them to a man; even the "honest angler" is loth to do anything to help water bailiffs.

It is no easy matter for the bailiffs to catch poachers in the act. The poachers have their touts, and long before the watchers reach the scene of operations, the "jiggers" have been pocketed, and the poachers, laughing up their sleeves, are fishing with tackle which is beyond reproach, and which is not in the least likely to catch fish!

When a flood has run off, and the fish are scattered about the river, the poachers devote their attention to the pools where they lie, intent on catching fish not by the mouth, but by the body. The result is that it becomes impossible for the fair fisher to get sport, so harried are the fish.

In some instances angling associations try to check-mate this type of poaching by restricting the size of the hook which may be used by the angler. The hook is fixed at such a size as to make hooking elsewhere than in the mouth difficult. They also make rules prohibiting angling at notorious poaching-places. This does a certain amount of good, especially the latter rule. When an angler is "fishing" in a proscribed place it is *prima facie* evidence that he is up to something.

Too often, however, such rules handicap the "honest" angler more than the poachers, who, when in company, don't worry about rules and regulations. Moreover, legally, the angler may use any size of hook he chooses, if he puts a worm on the hook and keeps within the law.

If the angler persists in retaining a foul-hooked fish and the Fishery Board prosecutes, it is by no means certain that a conviction will follow. The intention to foul-hook must be proved, and it is not illegal for an angler to retain a fish which has been foul-hooked in the course of fair fishing.

As a matter of fact this frequently happens—sometimes in fly fishing, but more often when spinning or "roving" with a prawn.

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In both cases the hooks are freely exposed, and when fish are crowded in a pool or a confined space foul-hooking is more than a possibility. Some anglers are exceedingly expert at foul-hooking fish, even with a fly. One hates to say it, but foul-hooking requires skill and judgment of a high order. Some anglers are so skilful that they require nothing more than an ordinary salmon fly and a piece of trace-wire for a cast. They will throw the fly so accurately that—the steel wire making it sink rapidly—it will come in contact with the body of the fish.

Another method sometimes used to deceive the "keeper" or bailiff is to use the rod as a gaff. A large fly is attached to an ordinary cast and reeled up until it is sticking in the top ring of the rod. The rod is then pushed into the water where a salmon is seen, or known to be lying. The hook is jerked into the side of the fish. The fish dashes off, pulling out the line. It is then "played" in the ordinary way. If the bailiff appears on the scene it is explained that the angler was using the fly and it foul-hooked the fish accidentally.

There are those who would solve this problem of foul-hooking by making it illegal to retain any fish hooked elsewhere than in the mouth. Only in one river in Scotland, so far as I have been able to trace, is there a rule that all foul-hooked fish, even when caught in the course of legitimate angling, must be returned to the water. Failure to obey this rule means that the offender will not receive another ticket. In one association water there is a curious rule which stipulates that fish foul-hooked *under* water when fishing with worm must be returned. The idea apparently is to safeguard the legitimate angler who foul-hooks a fish unintentionally with fly or minnow.

There are three reasons why it is undesirable to make it illegal by statute to retain foul-hooked fish. The first is that to land a large salmon, foul-hooked on ordinary

tackle, calls for much more skill from the angler than if the fish were hooked by the mouth in the ordinary way. It is a poor reward for such skill that the angler should be obliged to return such fish to the water.

The second reason is that such a law would merely victimise the fair fisher, and would in no way prevent the poacher from poaching. The third reason is that before a foul-hooked fish can be landed it must be completely exhausted. There is a great danger that if such a fish were returned to the water it would die, and dead fish are no asset, but a danger to a fishery. If the fish were to recover, the injury which it had received would make it susceptible to one or other of the parasitic diseases which afflict fresh-water fish.

CHAPTER XII

MANAGEMENT OF CLUB WATERS

A CRITICAL examination of the "rules and regulations" of over eighty Scottish angling clubs, backed by thirty years of personal experience as an angler, including a period as president of a large workingmen's angling club in a populous area, suggests definite methods by which angling for trout might be improved through the association system. The approach, however, is made—as I suggest it should be made—from the standpoint of a "fair deal" for the fish as well as for the angler.

I think I am right in saying that the chief object—within the limits of the law—of the vast majority of anglers is to catch as many trout as they possibly can, irrespective of conditions, such as the state of the river and the mood of the fish. I have only once heard an

angler say that he stopped fishing when the trout were too easily caught ; I have never seen an angler do so.

The occasions on which catching trout is a "duffer's game" may be few and far between, at least when the water is low and clear, as it is normally for three-quarters of the season ; but consider what happens when a spate occurs. Everybody who can handle a rod hurries to the river with a bag of worms. If the state of the water is just right great execution is done, for, practically speaking, trout have no chance to defend themselves. They are ravenous and cannot see the gut cast. They smell the worm and seize it.

Generally the angler is using a cast so strong that all he has to do—and does—is to "yank" the trout on to the bank. To my mind, it is absolutely wrong. No circumstances whatsoever can justify the use of such tackle and such methods. Yet, so far as I am aware, there is not a single club which prohibits bait fishing in a spated river or regulates the tackle which may be used, or limits the number of fish which may be taken.

There are occasions when, the trout being "bang on the minnow," a skilful angler may kill several dozens of trout in the course of a day's fishing. There are times also—especially in the early part of the season—when similar execution may be done with the fly. I suggest that that also is wrong. There ought to be a limit to the number of trout which may be taken at any time and in any circumstances, and by any lure.

Every club sets forth in its constitution that its object is to preserve the fishings under its control, to keep up the stock of fish in the river, and to provide sport for the "honest angler." Yet almost invariably rules are drawn up in such a way as to encourage anglers to kill as many trout as they possibly can. Almost invariably he is permitted to kill small trout—sometimes as small as

6 in. in length, more often 7 in., in comparatively few instances 8 in. So far as the majority of Scottish streams are concerned—I am not referring to burns—a 6 in. limit is ridiculous and a 7 in. limit may be too small. In streams where fish are numerous and of good size the minimum size limit should be 6 oz. If a river is to be properly preserved the minimum size limit should be fixed as high as possible.

The best way in which to determine what is a fair minimum size limit for a river would be to pass a rule making it obligatory on all members to report to the secretary the number and weight of the trout caught by him in the course of a season—a size-limit of 7 in. having been tentatively agreed upon. The total weight of the trout caught having been divided by the total number, a fair average may then be easily determined.

To my mind, however, there is a better way of preserving the stock of fish than by means of an arbitrary minimum size limit. It is to limit the number of trout which may be taken by any one angler on any one day. There is no such rule in any Scottish club so far as I have been able to trace.

A number limit has the great advantage of adaptability, as it automatically suits itself to prevailing conditions. It is a common experience to find that on some days the smaller class of trout only are on the move, whereas, on other days, the weightier specimens as well are active. If the angler is lucky enough to be on the river on the latter occasions, and he knows that the number of trout which he may kill is limited, he is not going to take small fish. On the other hand, if only small trout are on the move, no great harm is done if the number which may be killed is limited.

Assuming that a club decides to fix a number limit, what should the number be? Again the "law of averages"

should apply. The factors to be considered are the total number of anglers who have fished during a season, the total number of outings, and the total number of fish caught. For example, let us say that 100 anglers have fished in a club water in the course of one season, and that the aggregate number of outings has been 5,000. Divide the total number of trout caught by the latter figure, and the potentialities of the river in the way of providing sport may be fairly accurately estimated. It should then be a simple matter to fix a reasonable number limit. To be attractive the number limit should, of course, be fixed as high as possible. If the average determined by the method described turns out to be low in a normal season, it would mean that the stock of taking trout has been too much reduced. Restocking is, therefore, imperative, and must be continuous.

Consider how the stock in a river may be depleted in the course of a single season. If 100 anglers fish, on the average, twice per week and each catches on the average 10 trout per outing, the total number of fish slain would reach the surprising total of 27,000. If you like to reduce the average catch to five, the number at 13,500 is still formidable. I am of opinion that in many rivers the number actually killed every season far exceeds the latter total. That leads to this. In no Scottish club rules that I have examined are members obliged to make a return of the number of trout caught, except in competitions. How is it possible, under such circumstances, to keep an efficient control of the stock of trout in the water? In the great majority of Scottish rivers the restocking that is done is negligible as compared with the number of trout taken out. Yet, if sport is to be maintained, there must be some approximation between numbers taken out and the numbers put in.

Another matter of some importance is the fishing com-

petition. The great majority of clubs favour and encourage these trials of skill, and some even encourage other clubs to hold competitions in their waters. In a few cases competitions are debarred as being inimical to the interests of the river. I personally favour that view. To my mind competitions are bad for a river and bad for sportsmanship. One personal experience shows how. One June midnight on the Tweed I hooked a large trout which I had difficulty in landing. I shouted to an angler who was fishing a short distance upstream and asked him to come to my aid. His reply was, "Ah'll dae aethin' o' the kind. A'm fishing a competition.", To show further how the competitive spirit is harmful one has merely to read the competition rules of the average club. They would seem to be framed on the assumption that the prospective competitors are cheats who must be closely watched.

The majority of clubs permit angling throughout the statutory season. So far as trout are concerned, this may be wrong and very harmful to the true interests of the club. The only determining factor should be the condition of the trout. If they are not in really good condition before the middle of April—and I am of the opinion that in few, if any, Scottish rivers have spent fish recovered before that date—the season should not open until then. And it should close not later than the middle of September. It seems to me to be the "height of absurdity" to permit the killing of trout which are well advanced towards spawning when each fish killed means the loss not of one, but of many, potential trout.

To sum up I would suggest that the following steps are necessary for the proper management of club waters :

1. A number limit should be fixed as well as a minimum size limit.
2. A return of trout caught should be required from

- every angler, so that the stock of trout in the river ay be maintained by restocking if necessary.
3. Bait fishing during spates should be prohibited or controlled. The number limit might be considered to be sufficient. control. It would be hard on non-resident anglers if, being unaware of local conditions, they were to arrive at the river and find that they were not allowed to fish because it was in spate.
 4. Competitions should be prohibited or restricted. The number limit might apply. The prize-winning baskets would then be determined, as at present, by weight. This would tend to prevent small trout being killed. Alternatively, the minimum size limit should be raised substantially.
 5. The season should be determined solely by the condition of the trout in the river concerned.
 6. Every club should prohibit fishing in certain stretches of their water. Such stretches would serve as feeders for other parts of the water.
 7. Bait fishing of every kind should be prohibited before the Middle of May and after the end of August. (This includes fishing with natural flies ; such as stone flies, " creeper," etc.)
 8. There should be stretches where fly fishing only is permitted. It is not right that anglers who fish with fly only should have their water raked with minnow or harried with worms.

It follows that management committees must have sufficient funds to carry out these requirements. In the great majority of clubs subscriptions are too low for local members and in many cases too high for visitors. That is bad business from every point of view, except keeping strangers off the water. It is certainly anything but " democratic." I leave it at that.

CHAPTER XIII

ABOUT EELS

EELS are most interesting fish, and the more I study them the more attracted I am by them. I notice the eel is a regular browser. It lays itself close alongside a rock, even when it is being washed by a fairly heavy current, and burying its nose in the vegetable growth with which the rock becomes covered in hot weather, it gradually works its way along by gentle, undulating movements of its body until it has reached the end of the rock, when it will move on to the next one. As the growth on the rock is full of minute animal life, the eel must have the time of its life in hot weather.

Eels are a curious mixture of boldness and timidity. One evening I was watching an eel browsing in the manner I have described. I was fishing worm at the time and I dropped the worm a short distance in front of the eel. It began sniffing round, but I had removed the worm to another spot a few inches away. The eel became excited. Its movements became quicker and it began sniffing about much as a terrier sniffs about to locate a rat. By and by it found the worm, and with amazing rapidity—so quick that the eye could not see it—the worm had disappeared into the eel's mouth.

I was careful not to strike, because I did not wish to hook the eel, but I put on a strain and there immediately followed a fine tug-of-war. The eel was loath to give up the worm, but eventually it ejected it. In a moment, however, it had seized it again and the whole process was repeated. Three times this happened, and it might have gone on happening indefinitely, but at that moment

there as an increase of water owing to the manipulation of some mills, so I began fishing again.

Later I tried the same experiment with another eel similarly employed, but it would not touch the worm although I floated it repeatedly past its nose. The vision of the eel, however, in daylight seems to be very defective. Smell seems to play a much more important part, and eels will come upstream for a considerable distance if attracted by the smell of food. They may be induced to enter a landing net if it is laid on the bed of the stream and food is placed inside it. If the landing net has a bright ring, however, the eel is reluctant to cross it.

The eel is supposed to be a deadly enemy of young trout, but I doubt whether it is as black as it is painted. I have repeatedly seen young trout paying not the slightest attention when an eel is in the vicinity, nor did the eel take any notice of the trout at all. Eels do eat trout, of course, but I think the trout they succeed in capturing are weaklings, and are, therefore, better out of the water.

No doubt eels devour any ova they come across, or will suck in trout fry when they are sheltering under stones. The eel, much more than the trout, is adapted for spotting about under stones. Further, if a fish has been wounded and is bleeding the eels will pursue it mercilessly. A large salmon has been pursued by eels if it has been hurt or is sick. The eels harry it, and keep it shifting from place to place until the fish is completely exhausted. It then falls an easy prey. I have seen eels feeding on the flesh inside the heaving skin of a dead kelt, their bodies being completely hidden.

From this point of view the eel is a most useful scavenger, and but for it many a dead fish or other creature would be left to pollute the water. On not a few occasions also have I been indebted to eels for releasing tackles which have become "hung up." This

applies especially to prawns. They worry the bait, and so the hook comes away.

Eels may occasionally be caught on artificial fly while fishing for trout, and they have been seen to come to the surface, just like a trout, and suck in a fly floating down. I once saw an interesting battle between a herring gull and an eel about 18 in. long. The gull saw the eel and pounced down on it. It then perched itself on a rock and tried to swallow the eel head first, but the eel twisted its body round the neck and shoulders of the bird, so that the gull could make nothing of it. Finally the gull gave it up and the eel got back into the water, victorious but, no doubt, badly bruised about the head. It was comical to see the efforts of the bird to get rid of the slime which the eel had generously bestowed upon it.

I have had the experience of eels taking the artificial fly more than once, and I know one pool on Tweed where it is frequently done. The pool is called Cowie's Hole, and is at Newstead, a mile below Melrose cauld. A cliff or scaur forms one of the banks of this pool. Under the cliff there is a ledge of rock some feet in width. Deep water lies beyond this ledge, but on the ledge itself the water is shallow. At night, when the flies are hatching, the eels lie on this ledge, and will seize the anglers' flies when they are thrown over it.

If a fly is near the bottom there is no reason why an eel shouldn't take it, especially if there is tinsel on the fly to make it glitter like a small fish. But an eel will rise to a fly like a trout. On one occasion, when I was fishing Whitadder in Berwickshire, my wife and I, standing on the wooden footbridge at Edington Mill, saw an eel rise in several feet of water and take a fly that was floating down on the surface.

Everybody knows by now, I suppose, that the freshwater eel is the most wonderful fish that is found in

our rivers ; that the characteristic of the salmon and the sea trout which make these fish return for spawning purposes to the river in which they were born, is a mere trifle when compared with the instinct which makes the eel, at the call of nature, leave the hill burn, the loch, or the river in which it happens to be, and travel thousands of miles until it reaches the part of the ocean where it was born. The edible quality and nutritive value of the eel is high, and although the Scottish angler won't eat it himself he is quite ready to catch it for the English, who are very fond of it.

Thus in the Borders eel hunts are organized. A band of anglers make a night of it on, let us say, some fearsome hole of the Tweed. The rod consists of a stout pole, the line of cord, and the bait of a great ball of large dew worms strung head to tail on worsted. This is sunk into the pool and allowed to lie until tuggings indicate that the eels are busy at it. Then you heave to, and the eels find themselves on dry land—there to be transferred all alive and kicking into a capacious sack.

No hooks are used in this kind of fishing because no hooks are required. Owing to the teeth of the eel pointing inwards towards the throat the worsted becomes entangled with them when the eel bites the worms, and before the eel can get free the angler has it on the bank. Eel-hunting is usually an all-night affair, and the darker the night the better. It is great sport and highly profitable, and many a hundredweight of eels is sent across the Border to the English market. Usually whisky is not absent from the ploy, and the fun is fast and furious.

This reminds me of an amusing incident which occurred in a Border village some years ago. The eel-hunters had arranged with a local hotel-keeper to have supper ready for 2 A.M. On the return of the anglers the gentleman who had been carrying the sack of squirming

eels laid his burden down in the lobby. During supper the landlord, in an unlucky moment, asked where the eels were, adding that he didn't believe they had got any. Whereat the party who had been carrying the eels got up quietly, albeit somewhat unsteadily, from the table and went out of the room. Presently he returned carrying a sack. Going to the middle of the room where the proprietor was standing, he gripped the sack by the bottom corners, and with a sudden heave he tumbled the best part of a hundredweight of live eels on to the carpet with the single word "There!" That was all he said; what the proprietor of the hotel said cannot be recorded.

I was obliged to the late Mr. Wilson H. Armistead, the consulting pisciculturist, for the following letter:

DEAR SIR,

I read your Angling Notes each week in the *Glasgow Herald* with great interest, and I am prompted to send you the following notes concerning the eel, following upon your observations.

I think your impression that eels do not see well is accounted for by the fact that they are mainly nocturnal feeders. The browsing you mention is one of the many disastrous habits of this fish—it is the way they pick up large quantities of miniature trout food, such as the eggs and spawn of crustacea and mollusca.

It is at night that they are trout feeders, though if you watch the tree-shaded pools when trout fry are about you will see that they can and do catch these small fish very cleverly and in large numbers. I have lain on the bank of an evening watching the eels feeding in the pool on the Tweed below Neidpath Castle (in June) and on one occasion I saw an eel take ten fry in ten minutes!

You are quite right about the extraordinary rapidity with which they catch and swallow their food. I, too, have failed to follow their movements with my eyes, but I have seen the approach, the flash of the strike, and the disappearance of the victim.

When turning down yearlings—either in a loch or stream—it is a good plan to set an eel line near the place. This no doubt saves a good many fish that are particularly liable to be caught because of the strangeness of the surroundings. When they have settled down there is not the same danger. Eels taken on a line set on such occasions invariably have one or more small trout inside them !

I could give you many instances of the destructiveness of eels amongst trout. Only a short time ago seven eels accounted for 16,000 inch and a half fry in six weeks, and the largest of them was not a pound in weight !

I have taken a half-pound trout from the stomach of an eel weighing 4 lb. !

May I suggest that you would be doing angling associations a service if you wrote a warning against the common farmyard duck ? For eight months in the year these birds are destructive, but particularly in March and April. If anyone wishes to test their fish-eating propensities it is only necessary to set a line on the shallows where they feed, baited with, say, minnows. No hooks, of course ! Many thanks for much pleasant reading.

Yours, etc.

Mr. Armistead points out the damage done by domestic ducks to trout fisheries ; the trouble is that there does not seem to be any legal redress if somebody else's ducks make a happy hunting-ground of one's water ; at least it is extraordinarily difficult to prove damage.

CHAPTER XIV

THREE FISH FOR GRAYLING

WE three—the Admiral, the Boy, passing twelve, and as keen about fishing as a terrier about ratting, and myself took our way, on a recent Sunday, to the Earn in order to see what the grayling had to say about it. It was the Admiral's idea. He seems to be keener on grayling than on trout, which is one of the eternal mysteries, and for a long time past has been searching for a fishing paradise where he might spend the Sawbath without hurting anybody's feelings. Now, rumours had been bruited abroad that the Earn was hotching with grayling, and that it would be considered a virtue if anglers would go and catch them. But rumour did not say exactly where the fish were to be found. However, the Admiral, the Boy and Self decided to take a chance.

It was one o'clock before we reached the river after a journey of some sixty miles, partly by train and the rest by car. The Admiral, who is versed in these things, said it was a perfect day. The Boy said nothing, but got into his waders, mounted his rod, supplied himself with worms and a landing net and streaked off to the river, while the Admiral and Self were thinking about it. I admired that boy—he was so like what I was at his age and for a long time after! When he goes fishing, he goes to fish, not to talk about fishing, admire the scenery or anything like that. Thus it happened that, by the time the Admiral and Self got down to the water, having taken the easiest but not the shortest way thereto, the Boy was hard at it in a stream which looked a likely place for grayling to lie in.

Is there such a thing as second sight, piscatorially applied? If not, please explain this. On the way to the river I had made up my mind to fish in a certain pool, but when I got to the place I changed my mind and decided to fish in another pool. Not only so, but at a certain part of that pool. I don't know why I changed my mind, unless it be that the second pool was nearer the place where the car had to be left. Anyhow, the Admiral and Self commenced operations in that long, rather narrow pool, with gravel at the one side, bushes at the other. The Admiral began in sharp water at the neck, while I went to my chosen place two-thirds of the way down. There the bushes ended and there was a small bay formed in the far bank. The water was easy flowing, the surface smooth, the depth about four or five feet. Wading in, I cast the float up-stream, the bait being a brandling worm mounted on a Thompson tackle. The float came drifting down slowly. . . .

But before I go any further I should explain that three different kinds of equipment were being used. The Admiral used a spinning rod and a large reel of the Nottingham type, the Boy an ordinary fly outfit, while I used the threadline. As the Admiral said, truly, I could flick my comparatively small float anywhere while, even with a fairly big float and well-leaded leader the length of his cast was severely limited. As for the Boy, he did well with his fly outfit, but it is not easy to cast a float with a short fly rod. In fact, the threadline is the method *par excellence* for float fishing when one has to cast considerable distances.

But to return to that float drifting slowly down with the current. It had not travelled more than a few yards when it slid under. I struck and felt the resistance of a struggling fish. Trout or grayling? That was the question. The answer was grayling—a fish of half a pound.

A glance down the river showed that the Boy was playing a fish "as to the manner born." In fact, it was vastly amusing to see him work his way cautiously on to the gravel, backwards. Presently the fish was "high and dry." Meanwhile, grayling number two was engaging my attention, and hard on its heels grayling number three. I had apparently got into touch with a shoal. I shouted down to the Boy to come up, but he replied that he was getting an offer every cast.

Presently came a shout from the Admiral. The foolish fellow had got himself fast into a salmon. Now a salmon, even a small salmon as this was, may take long enough to land on a trout cast, and winter afternoons are short. There was talk about breaking and the usual disinclination to "do the deed." Fortunately the salmon kept on the move, and I got a chance to lift it out by the tail. A red cock fish of eight or ten pounds, oozing milt. The tiny hook had taken a surprisingly firm hold inside the mouth. The salmon having swum away, apparently none the worse, grayling fishing was resumed, The Admiral in his small corner and I in mine and the Boy sticking to his. "I have been broken in a big one," he shouted out—not "by" a big one, as a common person would say, but "in" a big one as the true angler says. Presently the Admiral got a grayling and then another, while I seemed to be losing or landing grayling more or less continuously. This apparently was a grayling festival.

Now, about a hundred yards upstream was a most beautiful pool which I thought must hold many grayling of a large size, so I left my little bay, waded across the river, shipping a deal of water—and mighty cold water, too—during the journey. I spent a good long while in this pool without any results at all. I then returned to my starting place and once more began to kill fish, having five on the bank at short notice. The Boy had,

by this time, left his corner to try his luck up the river. The Admiral had gone down the river, but had returned, his search having been fruitless. The Boy had four grayling in his bag, one a fish of fully a pound ; and he said he had landed some trout which, of course, had to be returned.

Some farm people had been showing great interest in our proceedings. Probably they thought we were poaching. The Boy reported later that a young woman had asked him what we were fishing for. "Grayling," he had replied. "What's grayling?" was the next question. "*That's* grayling," said the Boy, exhibiting a fish.

The fish which I had been catching were very even in size—nothing under a half pound or over three-quarters. I wanted something bigger, and went down to the place where the Boy had started. I ran the float down a hundred yards of water without seeing it bob, save once, when the hook had fouled the bottom. So I went back to the little bay which had been sore harried that afternoon. But the fish were biting much less freely. Perhaps because the temperature had become appreciably lower. In fact, it became necessary every now and then to clear the rings of the rod from the blobs of ice which formed in them. Moreover, although it was not yet three o'clock, the light was fast going. The Admiral wandered up the river and I followed to have a final try in the deep pool that I had already sampled. We spent a quarter of an hour there without any response, so we decided to call it a day, since there was a matter of catching a train.

But the Boy didn't bother about trains. I saw him streak away down the river to have another go. Ten minutes passed and there was no sign of him. Sundry hootings on the motor horn raised an echo in the distance which cried "coming," but another ten minutes elapsed before the owner of the voice arrived, quite pleased with himself, and not at all impressed by the warning that

the train might be missed. We bundled him into the car, waders and all. The train was caught with a little to spare.

When I got home and turned out my basket I found that my catch numbered seventeen grayling, weighing about 10 lb. The Admiral had caught nine (not to mention the salmon) and the Boy four. So that the total catch for roughly three hours' fishing was thirty grayling, one salmon and sundry trout. Yes, we will go back to the Earn!

(Having explained why I changed my mind, so profitably, about where I should fish, please explain why, on subsequent visits, I never caught any more grayling in that pool! For that is how it turned out.)

CHAPTER XV

A SALMON DAY ON THE EARN

THERE are those who despise October salmon because they are not so handsome as the springer. It is true that your October fish is apt to be black or red, according to sex, but it is equally true that it can be passing fair. It depends on conditions. If the fish have been prevented from leaving the sea by lack of rain during September, the October fishing and the October fish may be highly desirable.

The mischief this back-end has been that we have had too much rain. Flood has followed flood with disconcerting rapidity, keeping the fish on the move—a condition which is not good for salmon angling. Thus, a fortnight's holiday taken in the middle of October found the water in condition on three days only. One yielded two fish, one nothing at all save sea trout, and the third—ah, the third is worth telling about!



I fished the Earn that day in the Auchterarder House water by the kindness of the proprietor, the late Mr. Andrew Reid. It was the first occasion upon which I have found that rather fickle river in condition. It has been my fortune hitherto to find the water either too small or raging down in hopeless flood. But on this Friday the water was perfect; although on the previous day it had been too high. The day was perfect, too—a bright, mild day without wind. I had made up my mind the night before what I was going to do. I would spend the forenoon on the lower part of a long flat at the top of the water, and the afternoon on a long bend at the bottom. The intervening water, although good, I made up my mind to miss in order to concentrate on the best, even although it entailed a long walk in the “breeks.”

I began operations at half-past ten with an inch and a half Silver Grey. By twelve o'clock I had three salmon on the bank. But first a 2-lb. sea trout laid hold of the fly, and so came to an untimely end. It was a nice fish, and an excellent appetizer. Next came a half-pound finnock, black on the back and silver-sided, and the best of eating because there is no spawn in it. It says something for the voracity of these small fish that they should take lures up to three inches in length.

But it was salmon I wanted. Presto! there came the heavy pull, the raised rod, the momentary pause, and then the frightened run of the fish. I played it carefully, because to lose the first salmon of the day is a wretched experience. The salmon ran well, and, leaping, showed itself to be a shapely 16-pounder. All went well, and I was back into the water again, wading to the waist. This was unavoidable, because the salmon lie under bushes on the far side of the river, a 25-yard throw—not so easy when the bank is high behind and bushed.

A goodly fish gave that exhilarating splashy rise

twenty yards below me at a taking part of the pool. Sure enough, as the fly was worked slowly across, there came again the heavy pull, and the fish was hooked. This was a gallant fish. Five times, neither more nor less, it threw itself out of the water. It died full knightly, in harness, as Hamish Stuart used to say. Another bright 16-pounder.

I looked at my fly. It was sadly the worse for wear. Its silver tag was all undone, its tinsel body a thing of tatters. I trimmed it as best I could, that lucky fly, and heaved it again over the pool. A few casts and once more the rod was arched in a salmon. A dull fish this one, as if it had been exhausted by a long run up the river. If I had had a ghillie the gaff might have been in the fish in a couple of minutes. Its listlessness deceived me. I imagined, as sometimes happens, I had got into a new arrival which had not recovered from the effects of its labours. I unsheathed my gaff and drew the fish unresistingly to the side. Then the fish woke up and, perforce, I put the gaff away again. Full ten minutes passed before that salmon showed signs of weakening, and it took me to the very "hing" of the pool before I drew it up on the gravel and gaffed it ever so neatly by a mere thread of skin—a beautiful 18-pounder.

But my fly was done. I changed it for a slightly smaller Brown Turkey Wing with a silver body. I said to myself, "There very likely is a large salmon lying in the deep where the tail of the pool widens into a great fan." I worked carefully and expectantly over the "pot." "Peace be here!"—as Tom Purdie said when the sight of a muckle red fish of "Queed" made his eyes start from their sockets. I was into him. I slackened off the tension of my reel because I expected every moment to feel the weight of a heavy fish forging its way up the pool, dragging thirty yards of line behind it.

No such thing happened. This wretched beast, this sulking brute of a salmon, did not move an inch. It just lay where it was shaking its head savagely from side to side in that horrible movement known as "jigging."

Nobody has yet discovered the best way of dealing with this kind of fish. Most anglers, I fancy, do what I did. I stood still, praying that it would begin to run. I have made up my mind many times that the proper way to deal with a jigging fish is either to slacken off altogether, get below the salmon, and pull hard down-stream; or, better still, lower the rod and pull on the fish by hand. But, of course, one never carries out good resolutions. So here was I, standing like a fool, watching my rod being pulled up and down at the will of the fish. The not unexpected happened. The hook came away.

I had a mind now to mount the minnow rod and run over the pool with a small sprat. If that failed I would rove a prawn and then spin the same. But I still hankered after another fish on the fly. I therefore changed to an inch-and-a-half Brown Turkey, and went quickly over the water. The only result was a pull from a fish which did not hook. I tried the sprat, touched two fish, which were probably sea trout. I tried the roving prawn, which soon got fast in the bottom, so I changed over to the spinning prawn. At the tail of the pool I saw the wave of a fish following the bait, but it turned away without touching. And that was that. At this moment my friend, the keeper, opportunely arrived and helped me carry the spoils down-stream.

By the time lunch was over it was three o'clock, and that left me two and a half hours or so to fish the bend. The keeper put me in at the right spot, and gave me directions as to where the fish lay—and that was half the battle. As I worked my way down I saw a fish rise opposite a bush. It was a long cast, but a kindly

breeze which had sprung up helped me. The fly was seized, and in ten minutes or so the keeper neatly gaffed a 17-pounder. He told me of another fish which had risen fifty yards farther down. I worked slowly and carefully down to the spot. The fly was nicely pitched, but there was no response until it was almost straight below me. Then I felt the pull. I raised the rod, and for a moment or two the rod was arched, but the fly came away.

During the next hour four salmon came to the fly, but for some reason not one was hooked. A 2-lb. sea trout provided a diversion, but it had lost most of its silver, and as it had not been injured by the hook it was returned to the river to take its chance. But I was happy. Four salmon killed, one hooked and lost, and half a dozen raised and felt meant a full and lively day.

CHAPTER XVI

COMEDY OF THE TROUT

THIS is a story of the topmost pool of the River Tay—the Kenmore pool. I am sitting looking at it as I write these lines. Those who know the village of Kenmore, even those who have merely passed over the lovely bridge which divides the river from the loch, must know or remember this pool. A tantalizing pool it has been for me. I have lived beside it for a fortnight past, and have cast a minnow over its broad bosom scores of times, but I have still to take a trout out of it.

It is a curious pool, this first pool of the Tay. Long, broad, placid, with surprisingly little current coming through the centre arch of the bridge. But then the river is low—not exactly at summer level, but only a

few inches from it. No doubt with another three feet of water roaring out of the loch it will be turbulent enough.

But now it is quiet. Rippled by a slight breeze and spattered by rain drops. The tall trees clustered about the hog-backed bridge are deliciously fresh, and the bare hillside towering over them gives just the desirable touch of austerity. There is only one blot. These confounded telephone people have erected one of their hideous telegraph posts on the river bank in front of the trees. Why they put it there passes comprehension. Just thoughtlessness, I suppose. It is a gross affront to the beauty of the place.

However, my job at the moment is with the fishes that swim in the pool. But first I must describe a peculiar weed-covered, sandy ridge which runs down the pool for eighty yards or so near the left bank (looking to the loch). There is at the moment roughly from one to two feet of water over this bank, but at each side of it the water deepens suddenly and is, I suppose, from six to ten feet deep or more.

The very first day I arrived here I was thrilled by the rings of large fish rising in the gully between that curious bank of sand and the river bank. In this gully the hotel boats are moored, and the fish could be seen rising quite close to the boats. Be sure I lost no time in offering them a minnow lunch, but hooked they would not be. It was horrible. There were these rings which spoke of outsize trout, and there was I offering them free food and they would have none of it. True, there were rather sharp conditions attached to the offer, but that was a trifle. What was no trifle was the fact that I, armed with the very best in tackle that money could buy, was being humiliated.

About the fifth or sixth day something happened. Of course my nefarious attempts on these fish were spasmodic, mere hasty bites snatched between meals, as it were, but sufficiently serious to deserve reward. The

thing that happened on the fifth or sixth day was that I saw, with these mine own eyes, one of the large fish. It was following my minnow as if it meant business, but suddenly it disappeared. Perhaps it had seen me. Anyhow, it suddenly vanished. It was, and it was not. How my nerves tingled. How wildly beat my heart. That trout was every ounce of 6 lb. ! Think of it—6 lb. How often does the angler see a 6-lb. trout following his minnow, I would ask ? I determined to get me one of these trout, be it late or early.

These fish puzzled me. All the trout in the pool puzzled me. I could not get a single one to take a serious interest in my minnows. There is a fine broad tail to the pool—a tail where trout *should* be caught. I have fished it up. I have fished it down. I have yet to take a trout out of it with the minnow.

It is a certainty, however, that if one “ keeps one’s flee ” (or one’s minnow) in the water long enough one will catch a fish. It was, I think, the eighth day when my minnow was taken by one of these large fish. I had thrown the bait across the sandbank I have described, and as I began to retrieve it I saw the wave of a great fish following it. My heart leapt into my mouth, and my hair stood on end ; for these waves could only be made by one of the large trout which I coveted. As the minnow moved off the bank into deeper water the waves subsided. Was the fish still following or had it turned away ? That was the question. It was answered when the minnow was within a few yards from the shore. There was a sudden snatch, an answering strike and—*sizz*. The fish made for the centre of the pool. Over the bank it sped, making a mighty wave, and then—all went slack. The tiny hook had lost its grip. I felt sick. I put the trout at a good 6 lb.—almost twice the size of the largest trout I have ever caught. What a

reward after all my patient effort! However, nothing was to be done but to try again. Perhaps——

Heavens! The unbelievable had happened! The very next cast and I was fast in another weighty specimen. Fortune, after all, had frowned but to smile. Remembering the thinness of the line—2 lb. b.s.—and the smallness of the hook—No. 16 fine wire—I reduced the tension to vanishing point and applied a gentle finger-brake on the drum of the reel. The fish slowed down after a ten-yard spurt and began to cruise round in a leisurely fashion. I hate trout which behave like that. It always suggests to me a braggart amongst fishes. I can imagine such a fish touring round with a very broad grin on its face. I can hear it saying to its cronies—“That idiot there with the stick in his hand thinks he has got *me* cooked because of this footling little thing sticking in my jaw. Look at this——” and with a mighty wrench the tackle parts.

This big trout of mine didn't do this. It just sailed about. When I walked backwards it followed. When it got too near the side it barged out again—seldom going further than ten yards or so.

I was conscious of keen disappointment. I did not want my record trout to behave like this. I wanted it to rush about frantically, to toss itself into the air and fall back into the water with a mighty splash. I wanted every moment of the battle to be filled with excitement, with shivering dread, and the ecstasy of hope. But this dead-hearted brute! I gave the rod a toss to try to wake the fish up. It came to the top and gave a swirl, disclosing—what? A side which was not the side of any trout that ever swam! The explanation of the strange lethargy of the hooked trout flashed into my mind. The thought paralysed me. After all my eagerness, the patience which I had displayed, I dreaded to think that all the while I had been fishing for—*Pike!*

The bitter truth had best be quickly told. It was a pike I had hooked and lost and a pike which I presently landed—six pounds of pike and well out of the water. It was—I have no doubt about it—a pike which followed my minnow in the first instance, and which raised all my hopes. These pike come from Loch Tay, just a friendly call round the corner, so to speak. They lie—I watched them frequently after the experience related—sunning themselves on the gravelly bank. When they swim about they make big waves in the shallow water. Quite often they break the surface, just like trout. I hate them!

CHAPTER XVII

DOCTOR'S LUCK ON THE AARO

THIS is the story of the angling experiences of a doctor on the River Aaro, in Norway (Dr. Welsh of Bridge of Allan, a Scots Rugby internationalist and ex-President of the Ruby Union). The doctor is my own doctor; if he had been anybody else's I wouldn't have believed what I was told! For it is an extraordinary story, quite worthy of being classed among the tall yarns which quite innocent anglers are sometimes betrayed into spinning! My doctor is a very busy man and has not much time for fishing, but he went over to Norway for a week in the month of August to fish with some friends. They found the Aaro somewhat high and discoloured from melting snow, and not much sport was being obtained. The Aaro is a wide river, one hundred yards or more, I gather, and very swift. To enable the water to be fished wooden piers are built into the stream. The particular part of the river which I want to tell

about has a weir across it with gaps at each end, round which the water rushes; but the gap at one end is only a small gap, and the fish as a rule, when running, take the opposite end of the weir.

During the first few days of the visit the doctor was unlucky. While other members of the party were catching an occasional salmon and some big trout, the doctor was catching nothing at all except small trout. He began to get depressed and chaffed! Naturally. Now, desperate situations call for desperate remedies. Since the doctor could do nothing with orthodox lures he decided to try the unorthodox. He had heard, or read, about an angler on the Spey who had killed a salmon with a bit of orange peel. He made up his mind to try orange peel in case the Norwegian salmon had a taste that way! He, therefore, got an orange, and cutting a strip of peel from it he wound it round the pin of the spinner and tied it down. For half an hour he fished with this bait and then got a pull. Up went the rod, home went the hooks, and whir-r-r went the reel. Down the river went the fish, across the river, up the river, and then down the river again.

It was a big fish; that was obvious. When a big Norwegian fish takes it in his head to go down a fast-running Norwegian river it takes a bit of stopping. That is why the number of fish lost in Norwegian salmon angling is disproportionately large. Down, down went the doctor's fish, the doctor racing after. His luck was in. The fish came into the side of the stream, and the ghillie, being on the spot, had the gaff into it in a twinkling. That fish weighed 45 lb.—the biggest fish taken from the river during the season.

Now, you may say that the doctor was in luck and that luck of that sort happens only once in a lifetime. But let me remind you that there are exceptions to every rule, and this my friend the doctor was presently to prove. Next day, on the day after an event occurred in

comparison with which the orange peel salmon has quite an ordinary appearance! The doctor was spinning a spoon bait from the end of one of these piers I have referred to. He was throwing the lure over the stream and letting it come round until it was below him, and then working it slowly up the edge of the strong water. Presently he felt a touch, and struck. Whizz went the line, and down the river went the salmon. Fortunately, it did not go far. It ran across to the far side of the river and then made up stream. There was the doctor marooned on the end of that wooden pier and the fish making for the narrow gap about one hundred yards away from the doctor. The ghillie said it was all right, the fish would come back, they never took the narrow gap. The ghillie was wrong, as it happened, but before the fish took the narrow gap there was a diversion.

In going up the far side of the river the fish took the line round a rock. It was impossible for the doctor to get the line off the hook, so the ghillie went up the river and crossed over by the bridge. Hurrying down with a fly rod, he cast over the line, caught it with his hook, and freed it. The fish then went through the gap, above which other members of the party were fishing. The doctor's line became entangled in the weir and the trace broke. Ruefully, he reeled up his slack line and went to join his friends. *They were able to show him his fish!* Its efforts had so exhausted it that it could not face the strong current, but was carried down and held against the woodwork of the weir.

There was the doctor's fish, apparently dead; at any rate unable to swim away. A war council was held on the best means of recovering the lost salmon. First of all an attempt was made to drift a hook down to it. It was unsuccessful. Next they tried to drift down a gaff. That likewise failed. Johann, the ghillie, then said he would swim down to it and lift it out. The doctor

forbade that, for Johann is elderly and the waters of the Aaro are icy. They left the fish and had lunch. But all the time the doctor was pondering how he could get his salmon. At last he made up his mind. *He* would swim for it. His host absolutely forbade it.

Then Johann had a brilliant idea. He offered to go down the river for a boat. There was no difficulty in that ; the boat was procured and the fish recovered. It weighed 36 lb.

But the strangest part of the story is still to tell ! The head of the fish had been driven by the force of the water through two beams of the weir. It was as securely held as if the meshes of a net had got behind its gills. The doctor did not get back his spoon, nor was there any mark in the jaw of the fish to show where the hook had been. There was, however, a tear in one of the fins which told its own story. The fish had been foul-hooked. The doctor was by no means finished with these Norwegian salmon, for before his week was up he got other two heavy fish—a 41-pounder on the fly and a 31-pounder spoon-fed. But these salmon were caught in an orthodox way. The doctor, it may be said, was the only member of the party to get a heavy fish—the others had to content themselves with the minnows !

The capture of the 45-lb. salmon on orange peel recalls to my mind another queer bait which once killed a salmon—a small carrot ! Fishing on the Teith one day I met an angler who was spinning with this bait. He had either caught a fish himself, or had heard of somebody who had caught a fish, on a carrot and thereafter he used it frequently. Cut into the shape of a minnow and stuck on a spinner it looks quite an attractive bait, and there is no reason why it shouldn't kill fish. The leather eel has often struck me as a curious sort of bait, like nothing on earth, or rather in the water, and yet it kills fish. It had a great vogue some years ago.

CHAPTER XVIII

A DAY ON LOCH LYON

THE angling gods were kind for once. It was a perfect day. The sun was jovial and there was a brisk breeze. The glass was high, and the lady was out in all her braws. Not a flesh-and-blood lady, to be sure, but a small wooden one who lives in a small wooden house in the inn. She has some mysterious relations with cat-gut or some such contrivance. At any rate, when the weather is fine she comes out of her hidey-hole and her male counterpart sulks. I paid my respects to her daily. Mostly she was in hiding, but on this occasion there was no keeping her indoors.

So we went away with blithe hearts. How glorious was the run up lovely Glen Lyon of manifold beauty! Through the mountains we picked our way along that not-too-bad one-way track. At last there lay the loch before our eyes, sparkling in the sunlight, dancing in the breeze. The boatman was waiting for us, confident of success. "It's the best fishing day we've had for weeks," he said. The rods mounted, he had us to the top of the loch in a twinkling. The best fishing water lay at the top of the loch, he said, and he wanted us to have the best. Stout fellow!

I trolled a minnow on the thread line on the way up, got a pull or two, but no fish. The other rod plied his fly, casting ahead of the boat to allow for its rapid motion. He raised several trout and hooked a tiddler or two, but they didn't count. Long before we got to the top of the loch the clear light showed what we took to be the figure of a woman standing with arms outstretched not

far from the shore. I thought it was some warm-hearted body preparing to welcome us with a Gaelic speech, but it was only a scarecrow set there to scare the deer away from a small cultivated patch.

Enthralled, as the boatman pulled his lusty way amid waters lap, lapping against the bows of the boat and the complaints of the rowlocks, I watched the sun chasing the shadows over the sides of the mountains. What lights and shades, ever-moving ; what hills, haunt of deer and mountain hares and grouse and an eagle or two ; treeless, forbidding in the wintertime, but now gracious in their welcome ! A cairn built at the loch-side drew a question. The answer was in keeping with the place, but not with the time. It commemorated or notoriorized a sheep-stealer who, ages ago, had been hanged there for his misdeeds. Foolish fellow, he would have been far better fishing !

The top of the loch is shallow and a burn runs in. A trout or two were rising in a small stretch of calm water, but in the ripple there was no movement. Diligent casting, however, brought a reward of sorts. A quarter-pounder rose, was hooked, spluttered a bit, and was lifted from the water preparatory to being swung aboard to be unhooked and released. With splendid gravity the boatman lifted the long-handled, capacious landing net and with it followed the movements of the suspended trout. At last he engulfed it. The net was withdrawn, the fish taken out, unhooked, and (ere I could protest) knocked on the head. "That is just about the average size of the trout we catch here," said the boatman ! I was conscious of a shock. An average of a quarter of a pound ! I had visualized pounders and more. That was why I had tied up those special casts. Quarter-pounders ! Cæsar's ghost and all the rest of it ! Yet so it was. Occasionally one would get a six-ouncer, and once in a while something bigger, but so far as we

were concerned it was a case of quarter-pounders or six-ouncers and nothing more.

They had no preference in the matter of flies, these Loch Lyon tiddlers. Peter Ross was as good as the Butcher and the Zulu was as effective as Wickham. We fished hard, notwithstanding, hoping for a miracle to happen and also hoping for a general rise, which, however, did not happen. We tried this bay and that bay. I tried the minnow, but the big fellows, which are no doubt there, would have none of it. Two laddies from a shepherd's cottage, wandering about the lochside, egg-hunting no doubt, or guddling in the small burns which, like silver threads, cascaded down the mountain sides, stirred memories. A cart filled with coals rumbling its way to a shepherd's house caused some amusement, for there is no road and frequently the driver picked a way through the water at the side of the loch.

Midday came and we noticed the shepherd coming along the mountain-side with his two dogs. I suggested we might ask him to get his wife to make us some tea. The suggestion was approved. The boat was rowed over and the shepherd hailed. He hesitated a little, but at last said yes, his wife would make us tea. "And boil some eggs," the other male creature shouted. Yes, she would boil us some eggs, the shepherd promised.

We went on with our fishing, and on counting the spoils found we had a good dozen of trout in the boat. We put them in the net as a thank-offering to the shepherd's good wife. The boat was tied up, and over to the house we went. I expected that we would get a real Highland welcome; but it was scarcely that. We stood awkwardly at the door. The boatman asked at last if the "gentlemen could have some tea." Yes, they could have some tea, he was told, none too graciously. We entered the house and found ourselves in a room

with a small window, a stone floor innocent of any kind of covering, and walls of deal boards. A young child slept near the fire, and several other children sat shyly near the fire. There were no eggs, we were told brusquely. I asked the woman if she liked trout. Yes, she liked trout. The boatman laid the fish down on the floor. On the table was a crushed tablecloth of a coarse material a plate of plain bread, and another heaped with home-baked scones (which were excellent, and to which I confined myself). Butter and jam completed the repast.

Gradually we got the woman to talk. I asked her if she wouldn't rather live in a town. She said she would not. She was all right where she was. She liked the hills. There was a school at the other end of the loch and there the children went for their education. I asked the two boys—fine, upstanding lads they were—what they intended to be. One was going to be a shepherd, the other wanted to drive a "motor." "She's no Highland woman that," was the comment made as we got into the boat once more to resume our fishing. Her speech showed that she wasn't. No doubt she has a hard life living there in the isolation of the hills. Winter, I should think, must be a sore trial.

Refreshed by the meal, we resumed our operations with renewed zest. Still no rise of trout came on. Indeed, very few fish were seen to move, and most of the trout taken rose to our own flies. Gradually we worked our way down the loch, fishing likely places, as at the mouths of burns, carefully; but little came of it. The minnow was tried intermittently. An occasional touch was felt, but no trout were hooked. The wind became fluky and uncertain. It threatened rain and the air became oppressive, but fortunately the rain held off.

By eight o'clock we had had our fill of Loch Lyon. Although the day had been uneventful in the angling

sense, it was thoroughly enjoyable. The boatman had a tit-bit up his sleeve for the end. After we had left the boat he took us to a shed, opened the door, and bade us enter. Inside was a magnificent motor-boat, as large as a lifeboat on a great liner. My friend, who is expert in such matters, was greatly interested. The boat, he said, could hold seventy people with ease. I was astonished to find such a craft in such a place, but was told that it is used for bringing the deer and the shooters down the loch after a day's stalking. And very nice, too. The boatman obviously regarded the boat with veneration. It is the property of a well-known manufacturer of cigarettes, so naturally I asked the boatman how many coupons it took to get a boat like that. His sense of humour got the better of him at that. And so our day on Loch Lyon ended, and so back to the inn.

CHAPTER XIX

ANGLERS—GOOD ANGLERS—GREAT ANGLERS

EVERY man who angles with an angle rod in the attempt to catch any kind of fish is an angler. The moment he catches some tiny fish in loch or stream he is a successful angler.

Everybody must have noticed, speeding past a river in a railway train or bus that when a man is observed possibly up to the waist in water fishing away, somebody is certain to say, "Look! There's an angler!" as if he were an object of curiosity. It is equally certain that somebody will pass a remark tending to prove that anglers are somewhat soft in the head; and still somebody else, charitably inclined, will say that they are harm-

less. But I have never known any of the critics, severe or indulgent, refuse a cut of salmon or a dish of trout.

Anglers are of three sorts. There is the "angler" in the abstract. His qualities are unknown. He is seen, like some amphibian, upright in the water, the butt of tourists, travellers, and small boys. There is next the angler in the concrete. He is either a "great angler," or a "good angler."

Don't run away with the idea that the "great angler" and the "good angler" are one and the same. Nothing of the kind. Any man may become a great angler merely by persistently taking up his rod and creel and disappearing for a while from his home. He might never get farther than some sequestered inn. Nevertheless, in time he will become known as a great angler. The words have no relation to the contents of his creel. Only the wife of his bosom knows the mockery that lies concealed in the words.

But the "good angler" is known solely by the contents of his basket. A man becomes known amongst his friends as a good angler when he has distributed amongst them sundry cuts of salmon or dishes of trout. He may have got his "take" from the fishmonger. It matters not a whit. He has been seen to go forth, his hat stuck full of flies and his rod in his hand. He invariably comes back with fish in his basket, and therefore he is a "good angler."

The apotheosis takes place when a man becomes both a great angler and a good angler. To become as a god it seems to be necessary that he should also be a great blower of his own horn. Thomas Tod Stoddart, the advocate who gave up the law for the fishing-rod, was a Great Angler. Of him it is said that when a friend asked, "What are you doing now, Thomas?" his reply was, "Man, I'm an angler!" If he had stuck to the

law he would have been forgotten long ago. But because he wrote books telling us about the fish he caught and because he wrote one immortal fishing poem, his name "will live for ever." W. C. Stewart, another Edinburgh lawyer, was a Great Angler. He wrote a book telling us about the monstrous catches of trout that he made. He thought nothing of slaughtering 20 to 30 lb. of trout in a day. But what sort of a day! A gamekeeper—whether enviously, contemptuously, disgustedly, or cynically can best be left to the imagination—said of Stewart's day—"Twenty-fower 'oors o' creepin' and crawlin'." But Stewart also wrote an angling classic in which, incidentally, he told us what a good angler he was. So he is entitled to be known as a Great Angler. There was also Daniel Webster of Clyde and Loop Rod, and John Younger, maker of boots and verses, philosopher and politician. Stoddart and Stewart and Webster and Younger, are about the only great Scottish anglers I can name. The others were too modest about their own achievements to qualify.

AN ANGLER'S OTTER

Many years ago I told the following story. It is a good story (although I say so myself, who shouldn't), but it provided me with a problem which I have never been able to solve. Some time after I had told the story an old gentleman came to me and said . . . But I had better tell the story first. Here it is :

I was fishing the Teviot. My creel was empty. As a last resort I tried spinning a minnow. Soon the bait was seized. I played the captive carefully, but was suddenly disturbed by the appearance of an otter, which appeared from nowhere and behaved in the most extraordinary way. I thought at first that it was after my fish until I noticed that the fish was not a fish at all,

but a baby otter which had got hold of the bait, and this was the mother otter trying to rescue her offspring. I was sorry about it and played the little thing so gently that the mother otter immediately saw that the whole thing was a deplorable accident and stood clear. As soon as I freed the otterette—to coin a word—the mother whistled and the pair disappeared.

I went on fishing, but soon had a feeling that I was being dogged. I turned, and, in the pool above, saw the mother otter and her baby. "Hang it all," I thought, "these brutes are after me. I don't like this." I had heard of lonely anglers, out without their nurses, being attacked by infuriated otters. . . . I scrambled to the bank, seized a stone, and waited. In a few moments the mother otter appeared in the pool. She looked at me a long time before diving. She was away for a minute or two, then came swimming straight at me. She was carrying something heavy in her mouth. She hesitated just a second at the edge of the pool, then ran quickly towards me, dropped at my feet the thing she carried, wagged her tail, and departed. I was too dumbfounded even to lift my hat. The otter had dropped at my feet—what, gentlemen? A four-pound trout—the largest trout I ever caught in my life!

Now, why did the otter behave in that extraordinary way? I have thought it out carefully, and have come to the conclusion that it was deliberately done as a thankoffering for my returning her babe unharmed.

That is the story. I never said it was a true story. Everybody knows that poets, anglers, and plumbers are allowed a certain amount of licence. . . . About a week after I had told the story I was walking along the street when I noticed the kindly old gentleman whom I have already mentioned. He also saw me and crossed the street to talk. "My friend," he said, "I have been thinking a lot

about your experience with the otter. They are remarkable creatures. Their intelligence is astonishing. I remember..."

I'm not going to tell *his* story. All I need say is that it put mine in the shade. But he told his tale from beginning to end with the gravity of an expert witness.

And the problem I have never been able to solve is this: Was that old fellow pulling my leg? Or was he administering a rebuke? Or did he actually believe that the tale I told was TRUE? And did he believe that the tale he told me was also true? I can't make up my mind.

So far as I can remember I have told, deliberately, only two angling whackers in my life, two only—and I am no saint. The other story was this:

I was fishing the Leader above Earliston. The river was dead low and hot and I was using the clear-water worm. I had caught as many trout as I wanted and was more or less moving about. I was walking along the bank beside a long, still pool with a good many boulders in it. The sun was shining into the pool and I noticed a large eel lying close to a rock. I dropped my baited hook close to the eel. It was immediately taken. Like a flash the eel vanished under the rock—and I cut my cast on a sharp edge.

The thing was done so quickly that I was intrigued. I put another hook on and another worm. Why, there was Master Eel again plainly to be seen! I dropped the worm beside him. Presto! the same thing happened! Under the rock he flashed and the cast was cut. I baited a third hook and offered it to him politely. Whip me if he didn't play me the same scurvy trick again.

I had no more hooks to spare, so went my way up the river. In the evening, when I was passing down the river again on my way home, I remembered Master Eel and was curious to see if he was still there. When I approached his lodging I noticed something shining

in front of the rock. "What on earth? . . ." I thought and waded into the pool to see what it was. It was the lid of a large biscuit box. On it was printed in an eely scrawl—FISHING TACKLE SOLD HERE!

In telling these tales I have discovered a curious thing of some psychological interest. It is desirable, beforehand, to advertise to the audience that you are about to pull their legs. If they know this they laugh uproariously, slap their thighs, burst their waistcoats, that sort of thing. If, on the other hand, you lead them up the garden path by making them believe that you are telling them the truth, they become somewhat embarrassed and resentful and your reputation as an honest man has gone for ever. It's very sad, really.

CHAPTER XX

FLY FISHING AS IT MIGHT BE

TAKING the season through, fly fishing is the least successful method of catching trout. Again, taking it by and large, the occasions upon which the angler obtains good sport with fly nowadays are astonishingly few in number. Rivers, especially of the moorland type, if they are reasonably free from pollution normally carry a large head of trout which must eat to live yet the angler may cast his fly amongst thousands of them for the greater part of a day and if he catches half a dozen he thinks no small beer of himself.

Usually the trout are not rising because there is no hatch of fly. When there is a hatch of fly and the trout are feeding, the angler, more often than not, is cheated. There is a fine hatch of olives let us say; an angler puts

an olive on his cast—an excellent representation of the original it may be. The trout may have nothing to do with it. The angler tries fly after fly and is compelled to retire in the end, defeated, chagrined and puzzled. There were the trout feeding heartily, rising “all over the shop” and yet his fly was ignored.

There are two probable explanations—to discover the correct one should be merely a matter of observation. A pair of opera glasses is most useful if one’s vision is not of the best. It may be found that although the trout are to be seen rising, they are not in fact taking the winged fly. If they are not it may be assumed that they are feeding on the nymph just as it is about to break the surface. If, on the other hand, they are clearly taking the winged fly they are refusing the artificial because it is obviously a fraud. This happens very frequently when the trout are madly feeding. In such cases the only thing the angler can do is to offer a different fly than the kind they are taking. This device will certainly take a few fish.

But generally the angler’s failure is due to the fact that he is offering a winged fly when the trout are feeding on the nymph. If he had offered a nymph instead of a winged fly he would, almost certainly, have caught trout provided the imitation was reasonably good.

What is lacking in this matter of the baffled angler is the patient, scientific approach. I suggest that it ought to be possible for the angler to know *before going to the water*, whether, in the first place, there is going to be a hatch of fly, and second, what that fly is likely to be. When he reaches the river and the rise comes on he should be able to tell whether the fish are nymphing or taking the winged insect. If they are nymphing he should be able to take from his fly box the appropriate nymph and proceed to catch trout.

Sounds like a fairy story—an impossibility. But why should it be? The first essential is exact knowledge and that is precisely what we lack. Yet it should be procurable by the exercise of patience. Angling fame awaits the angler who is prepared to apply his mind to this one purpose for, let us say, a decade. But obviously he must have opportunity. The river must be within easy reach and he must be able to go to it every day, or as near that as possible. Finally, he must be less concerned with the catching of trout than with investigation.

Certain simple apparatus is essential, apart from the fact that the angler must be able to "dress" flies or be in close touch with someone who can. He should have a pair of field glasses, a thermometer, a notebook and a muslin net of ample proportions.

To begin with at any rate, he would leave his rod and fly box at home. He would begin operations, let us say, on the first day of April which some would say would be most appropriate. He would reach the river about ten o'clock—too early for the trout to be rising. He would first make a note of the temperature of the water, the air, the direction of the wind, the condition of the water, light, sky, etc. Next he would make a note of any flies which he sees flying about. He would then wade into the water and stand in the stream with his muslin net well submerged. He may stand like that for a quarter of an hour. He would then proceed to the bank and examine the contents of the net, taking particular note of any nymphs which have drifted into it. This process he would repeat once every hour, whether or not there is a rise of trout.

Let us suppose that flies are hatched out in considerable numbers about twelve o'clock. He notes the time. When the trout begin to rise he observes carefully to see if they are taking the winged insect. He again takes temperatures of air and water, notes the direction of the

wind, etc. He will also wade into the water among the rising trout and submerge his nymph net in order to discover whether the nymphs are present at the place where the trout are rising. If the fish are taking the nymphs and refusing the winged insects he will prove that it is so by bringing his net into operation. He will thus discover whether, in fact, the trout are feeding on the nymphs of the winged fly which he sees on the water.

He will go on doing this day after day, fishing only when his thirst for knowledge has been quenched. When he finds that the fish are taking the nymph and he has discovered what nymph they are taking—it is almost certain to be the nymph of the fly which is predominant on the water—he will take some of the nymphs and make as faithful imitations of them as lies within his power. If his imitations are reasonably good it can hardly be doubted that he will catch trout with them, if he uses them during the rise.

When several seasons have elapsed, say three, he will take out his notebooks and collate the facts contained therein. He will do the same three years later. At the end of the tenth season he should have ample material upon which to found definite conclusions.

I suggest that he might be able to tell us, first, what are the conditions that bring about a hatch of flies; second, what kind of fly will hatch out in certain conditions; third, what are the conditions which prevent flies from hatching out; fourth, what are the conditions which cause the trout to feed on the flies or the nymphs; fifth, whether, in certain given conditions the trout will feed on the nymph or the winged fly. In addition, he will be able to tell us whether trout feed indiscriminately on both sexes of the fly or whether they prefer one sex to the other in certain conditions; also whether female or male flies predominate in these conditions.

In short sport will become a certainty—for the skilled angler; but that is a condition of affairs which mightn't please everybody!

CHAPTER XXI

JIGGERITIS

LOOKING from the railway train I saw a group of "anglers" standing near a waterfall on a small river frequented by salmon in the back end of the year.

"So the poaching season has begun!" I thought, and reflected upon two aspects of river life—the hard lot of the water bailiffs and the tricks of the poacher to outwit them. The dice, one might say, is heavily loaded against the river watchers for, as a general rule, they are few in number and have many miles of river to watch over. And not only that, but when they do make a "capture," and a prosecution follows, it seems to be very hard to convince the Sheriff that the watcher is telling nothing but the truth!

Imagine lying out night after night watching a part of a river known to be the poacher's happy hunting-ground. Then one night a poacher comes along and gets busy. The watchers catch him "in the act" and he duly makes an appearance in Court. It does not follow by any means that he will be punished. If he is a wily bird—and most poachers are—and not afraid to speak up for himself and abuse the bailiffs, it is surprising what may happen.

I have mentioned the guile of poachers. They know the advantage of "acting in concert"; not because it is then easy to produce a weight of evidence to confute the bailiffs, but because it enables them to watch the watchers. They post spies so that it is almost im-

possible for the bailiff to reach the river unseen. When their approach is signalled, off comes the poaching tackle and on goes a hook of the most innocent! When the bailiffs arrive there are anglers fishing away as if they did not know what a "jigger" was. What can the poor bailiffs do then, other than say, "Nice day, gentlemen," and depart, knowing all the time exactly what has taken place. Then the game begins all over again. Off come the fishing hooks and on go the "jiggers," and out come the fish, tail first.

Now let me make myself plain. There are poachers and poachers. I have some sympathy for the angler who goes out for a day's fishing, who does his best to catch a fish by the exercise of skill, legitimately applied, and who, having been defeated, takes a single fish for home consumption; but I have no sympathy at all for those poachers who take a rod to the riverside and have not the slightest intention of using it fairly. These are the people who will fill a sack with salmon if they can manage it, for the purpose of selling the fish. Such people can properly be described as river parasites. They spoil the pleasure of other people and can do infinite harm to a river.

Their method is very simple. They attach one or more large hooks to the line, to which they fix lumps of lead. They throw the tackle into a pool where salmon are lying. The lead takes the hooks to the bottom and the "angler" pulls them through the water with a series of jerks, hoping that they will come in contact with the body of a fish. That is the barefaced way. A subtler method is to put a small worm on the hook and allow it to drift along the bottom until it is stopped by something. It might be a rock, but it might be a fish. If it is a fish the powerful jerk puts a hook well and truly through the tough skin. A worm is put on so that the angler can plead, if need be, that he had a worm on his

hook. It certainly gives him a talking-point, because the bailiffs, unless they are to commit perjury, must admit it ; and as the law says nothing about the size of hooks which may or may not be used, or the kind or size of worm, it makes it difficult for the Judge to decide whether he is dealing with a clever rascal or an innocent knave.

The "jiggerer's" outfit is not complete without a gaff. This serves not only to land a fish if necessary, but it is also useful to "confuse the issue." The gaff is inserted into the fish at the point where the "jigger" was taken out. A wound is then made in the jaw of the fish ; and there you are. The wound in the jaw is the mark made by the hook, the hole in the side is the place where the fish was gaffed, and not even Sherlock Holmes could prove otherwise. Besides, the gaff is handy for a quick shot at any fish which provides the opportunity.

Oh, aye, the "jiggerer" does a lot of dirty work, but when all is said and done, he is probably the least sinful of the poaching race. The gang who use nets and cars may do more damage in less time, but for sheer hooliganism in poaching there is nothing to approach the dynamiter. The man who uses dynamite to kill salmon is "beyond the pale." He hasn't an atom of sportsmanship in him, for he destroys immature as well as mature fish. His only interest is to get away with the fish. Of course, if nobody bought poached salmon there would be an end to the poacher's trade, but salmon at sixpence a pound, sold at the back door, seems to be irresistibly attractive to large numbers of house-wives. And by the same token many and many a fish which has been found dead in the river has been put into the pot and, in the spring of the year, many and many a kelt has been eaten, in and out of hotels and restaurants, and voted prime salmon by ignorant diners, who did not see the grin of satisfaction on the vendor's face when he

pocketed the money received for a dead fish which he had raked out of the river.

There is another kind of poacher who does not sell the fish he catches, who may not even eat them, but gives them away to friends. Such poach purely for the excitement of the thing. I know several well-to-do business men who would rather catch a twenty-pounder by the tail than by the mouth.

As one of them put it to me recently, "When you feel the hook sink into the body of a fish you get a sensation which you cannot get in ordinary fishing." Another angler—a *douce* business man—told me with glee how on one occasion he had to swim across a river, and how he was subsequently pursued by bailiffs for several miles over a moor and how he ultimately gave them the slip by getting a lift on a car. Another, with great gusto, told me he was fishing in a narrow, rocky, and notorious river where everybody seems to poach, and the water-bailiffs had been, with complete justification, keeping an eye on my friend. He knew it and they knew that he knew it. Thus one day when they came upon him playing a fish which was indubitably foul-hooked they were jubilant. Indeed, the remark made by the head watcher when he and his colleagues appeared suddenly and unexpectedly on the scene was significant. It was, "We've got you this time, I think." My friend told me that he felt a horrible hollow feeling in the pit of his stomach. He realised that he was properly in the soup because he was using tackle so strong that it was impossible to break it. The salmon was a large one, and he did not press it as he would have done in happier circumstances. He was, indeed, prepared to play that salmon for the entire day if need be, but there was no shaking the bailiffs off. They followed him down the river. They stuck to him like brothers. My friend was

at his wit's end and had visions of appearing in Court, being fined, and subsequently made a fool of—not because he was poaching, but because he had been caught! Great was his relief when he saw a way out of the pickle he was in.

In the excitement of playing the fish he had quite forgotten that there was lying in his waistcoat pocket a small pair of scissors. He could have laughed aloud when he recollected their presence. Manœuvring himself so that the bailiffs were behind him he slipped his finger and thumb into his pocket, extracted the scissors, wound the line twice or thrice round the fingers of his left hand, cut the line close to the reel, and slipped the scissors back into his pocket. Presently the fish ran into a strong stream and made down the river. This was what the angler wanted. He pretended to put a mighty strain on the fish in order to prevent it from "going down," but this was merely a dodge. He let go his hold of the line, falling backwards most realistically when the strain was taken off. The bailiffs rushed forward, not to help the prostrate angler but to try to get hold of the line; but it was no use. It disappeared down the river—with the fish.

That is my friend's best story. He says it was a horrible experience at the time, but that, in retrospect it is the best bit of fun he had ever had while fishing!

CHAPTER XXII

SHORT-RIISING TROUT

HOW often do we hear anglers explain their lack of success by the well-worn adage—"They were rising short." What is meant is that the trout rose to the fly all right, but owing to some unknown condition,

possibly atmospheric, the trout missed the fly altogether, merely touched it, or were so lightly hooked that they got off after a few seconds. On other days when the trout are hungrier, and therefore more easily caught, the exultant angler says—"They came with a bang!"

Short-rising trout have baffled anglers for ages. I have read not a little about fishing, and I have yet to encounter the writer who has a cure for them. Various tricks have been tried. Slow striking, fast striking, sinking the fly, keeping it on the top, moving it quickly, slowly, using small flies, trying flies with the hook protruding abnormally behind the body of the fly. The result is always the same—failure. The man who circumvents the short-risers will earn the immortality which will be his!

I am going to suggest that there is no such thing as short-rising fish! By short-rising I mean missing the fly through error of judgment.

If the atmosphere is wrong for the artificial fly, it must surely be wrong for the natural fly. How often do feeding trout miss the natural fly? I am not going to assert that they never do it, but if it does happen it happens rarely. We do not know what is going on under-water, but we do know what is taking place on the surface. Every angler must have observed, although not very often, a trout rise to a floating fly and apparently miss it. That is to say, the fly is still visible after the rise. I don't believe for a single moment that the trout missed the fly. If it did it would, if it wanted it, go after the fly until it got it. It may have risen with every intention of taking the fly, but changed its mind at the last second, possibly because it wasn't the kind of fly it wanted.

What does happen frequently is that a trout will be seen to swim up to a floating fly until it almost touches it, inspect it closely, follow it downstream for a short distance, and then turn away. The dry fly fisher must

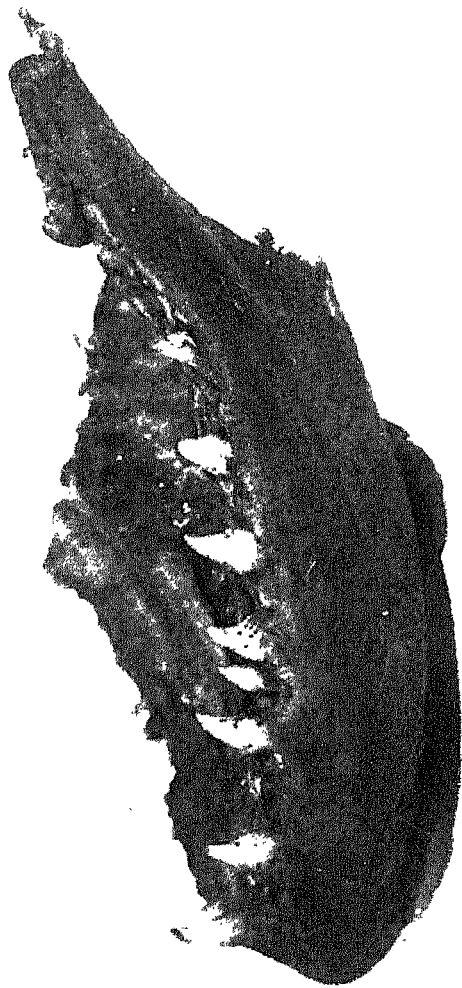
have observed this happen to his artificial fly; but the same thing happens with the natural fly, although not often in my experience.

The wet fly-fisher, especially the loch fisher, must frequently have seen trout coming to his fly and then turn away. Why do they turn away? It might almost be said, so far as artificial flies are concerned, to be a habit!

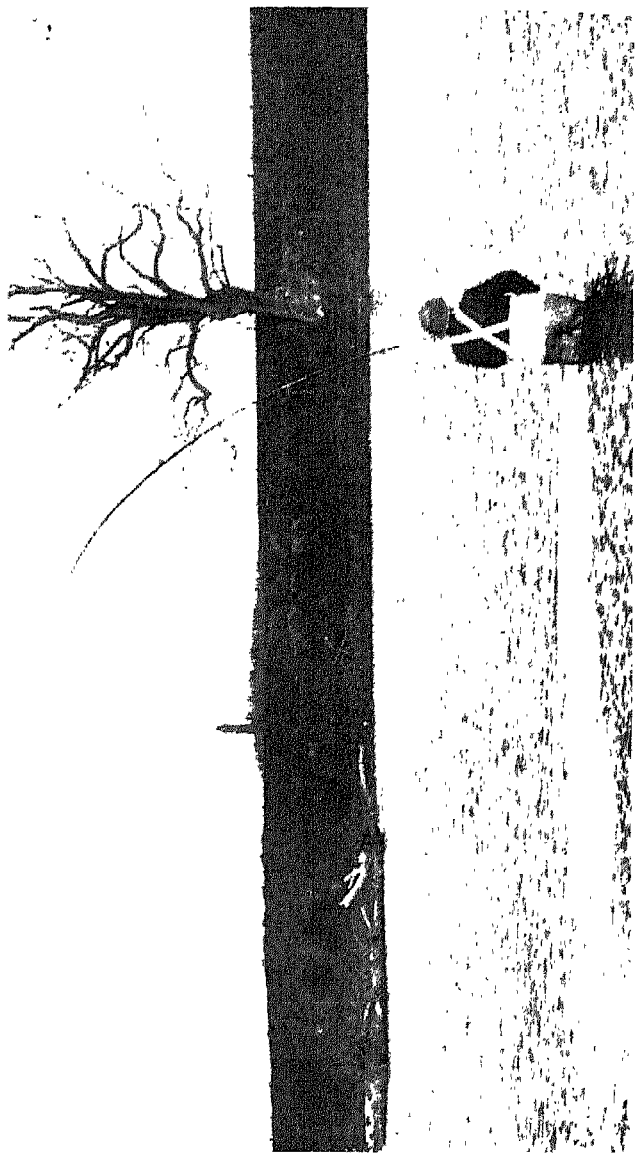
There is something obviously far wrong with our methods when we consider that, in the course of a day's fishing, our flies are seen by possibly thousands of trout, and yet we count ourselves fortunate, or clever, if we get a dozen, and very clever indeed if we get a score. There must be some reason which has nothing to do with the trout. If it has nothing to do with the trout the fault must lie with the equipment. I believe that it does. Personally, I blame the gut.

Consider a recent experience which a friend had on Loch Awe. He was stuck by the fact that the great majority of the trout killed were taken on the tail fly, which was mounted on four X gut, the cast being a tapered one. Only two trout were caught on the droppers. In river fishing the tail fly is nearly always the deadliest. On a loch the bob-fly does most of the execution, taking the season round. Is not one reason that trout see the fly only? The trout has less chance of seeing the gut to which the tail fly is attached than it has of seeing the gut to which the dropper is attached. For the dropper is not only attached to gut; it is surrounded by gut! As for the bob, the fly being more or less out of the water, the trout does not see the gut.

If my reasoning is right—and I would like to know where it is wrong—the kind of gut we use is more to blame for our lack of sport than the fly, and the chief fault of gut is its glitter. No matter how fine the cast may be, if it glitters it will frighten the trout. It is not for



JAW OF A MONSTER LOCH AWE SALMON



WALKING A SALMON AWAY FROM DANGER

When this fish was being played the rod top snapped. The fish was hard-lined until the break was patched up.

nothing that the majority of artisan anglers who fish the Clyde do not use gut at all. They prefer gut substitute, or Japanese gut, which is very like horsehair, and has the advantage of being three or four feet long in the strand.

CHAPTER XXIII

WALKING UP A SALMON

A SALMON usually "runs" away from pressure. Thus, especially when fishing with light tackle, the angler, if he wishes the salmon to run up the river, gets below it. If he wants it to go downstream, he keeps above it. If a salmon "bolts" and is likely to go down the river into dangerous water, he "slackens off" and strips many yards of line from the reel by hand, allowing it to be carried away by the current. As a general rule the moment the pressure is taken off, the fish, believing that it has rid itself of its tormentor, goes to the bottom.

The line continuing to drift downstream gets below the fish, and the current, exercising pressure on the line, makes the fish think that something is trying to pull it down the river. It accordingly runs upstream and continues running upstream until the angler, shortening line, regains direct contact.

How, then, is the phenomenon of "walking up" a salmon to be explained? Whether the tackle used be light or heavy the result, nine times out of ten, is the same. The fish follows the pressure instead of going away from it. Fishing the Tay on one occasion for trout with a 2-lb. line and a 3x gut trace, my wife hooked, at the bottom of a long pool immediately above a rapid,

a salmon of 12 lb. The river was in high flood and the situation was certainly dangerous. The fish was lying in the middle of the pool, 25 yards from the bank, with a strong, deep stream on the near side of it. Yet, with very little trouble, the salmon was "walked up" well up the pool, and was there killed, being tailed, since no gaff was available. The hook, be it observed, was size 16.

Now turn to the fly rod. The illustration shows an angler "walking up" a heavy salmon which had been hooked in dangerous water on a small fly and a light cast. This fish was lying immediately above a waterfall, and if it had gone over, the chances of bringing it back, or of landing it, would have been remote. On hooking the fish, therefore, the angler, without waste of time, turned his back on it and resting his rod on his left shoulder, began walking slowly and steadily up the river. This continued with short pauses when the fish showed signs of resistance, until it was the best part of 100 yards above the fall.

During the next two hours the process was repeated many times because the fish invariably worked back to the place where it had been lying when hooked. The tale has a sad ending because, after having been played for two and a quarter hours the hold of the hook gave. During the time the fish had never shown itself, but it was certainly a large one.

Does the explanation of walking up lie in the nature of the pressure applied? Normally, in playing a salmon, a fairly severe pressure is put on the fish, sometimes a very severe pressure if the tackle is strong. But the pressure necessarily varies constantly with the actions of the fish. But when "walking up" a salmon the pressure is even and is not severe, the whole object being to coax the fish up the river, not to force it. Moreover, in the "walking-up" process, care should be taken to ensure that the reel is not cranked in any way. Usually

the reel is covered by the angler's hand to prevent any vibration from it being carried to the fish.

Whatever the explanation may be, the result is undoubted; and many a salmon has been killed by being "walked up" out of a danger zone, whereas it would certainly have escaped if it had had the sense to stay where it was. A somewhat similar phenomenon occurs in loch fishing, whether for salmon or for trout. A hooked fish will follow the boat if it is rowed quietly away from a dangerous place. On one occasion while changing ground on a large loch, I put out a troll for trout. The line had a breaking strain of 2 lb. A good trout was hooked in the middle of the loch. Now, it was blowing hard, and the boatman found it impossible to hold the boat against the wind to permit of the trout being played. I therefore told him not to mind the trout, but to row on, which he did. I merely held on to the fish, expecting it to break the line instantly. To my surprise, that did not happen. The trout immediately quietened and followed the boat "like a lamb" for fully a quarter of a mile. We had then reached the bay we intended to fish, and I had no difficulty in getting the trout aboard. There was very little fight left in it.

To those who are not familiar with the method of walking up, it may be explained in a few sentences. When a fish is hooked in dangerous water the angler immediately turns his back on it and, holding a hand over the reel, and keeping the point of his rod well up, he begins to walk slowly up the river. There is little danger in the method, because if the rod is held high, its springiness takes the strain of the fish, if it should happen to plunge. Moreover, the angler knows instantly, from the actions of the fish, whether it is coming quietly or going to resist. If it shows signs of resistance the angler pauses until the fish quietens, easing off all pressure; then,

when the fish has quietened down again, he resumes his upstream walk. Some fish, of course, refuse to go "according to plan," and after travelling a few yards begin resisting furiously. In such cases other tactics must be tried.

CHAPTER XXIV

A BLAIR DRUMMOND RECORD

OUT of the eleven angling days at my disposal in the middle fortnight of October, 1935, I got exactly four on which the water was in condition. The constant fluctuations had ruined the prospect of sport and yet, as the sequel will show, there are exceptions to well-established rules.

Ten of my eleven days had gone and I had got only two small salmon, and these were hooked within an hour. I had gone to fish the Teith, found it in flood, and, as a last chance, made my way to the topmost pool of the River Lenny, where it flows into Loch Lubnaig. As I expected, the water, though high, was clear. I got both fish on the Golden Sprat. I hooked a third, but the hook straightened.

Blank days followed, days of wind and rain. And so we come to Friday, October 25th. On the Wednesday evening I had called on a friend who had been fishing on the River Forth a few miles above Stirling—it was there that the third heaviest salmon killed in any Scottish river that season was taken—a fish of 45 lb., and by this angler that I interviewed (see "Queer Things Happen Fishing"). He told me he had never seen so many fish in the Forth in all his long experience. He had killed quite a number and lost more. So apparently I had made a mistake in neglecting the Forth, where

the fishing is usually fourth or fifth rate. I determined to go to the Forth the following day, Thursday. I found it in flood and not a fish showing. Obviously they had "passed on"—most of them, I imagined, to the Teith. This suited me well, because, by the kindness of the laird, I had got a day on the Blair Drummond waters to finish up my holiday.

Three pools had been placed at my disposal—old friends, each of them; the Castle Pool, the Ardock Pool, and the Chapel Pool—long, broad pools and fishy. When I got to the river I found it in excellent trim, though just a shade on the high side. By half-past nine I was wading deep in the Castle Pool, throwing an inch and a half Silver Grey on—shades of our grandfathers!—an 18½-foot spliced Greenhart fly-rod, which had been thrown at me in a tackle shop for five shillings! It was a dull day without wind, a mellow autumn day with soft mists veiling the woods, a grand fishing day. I had covered one-third of the pool before I got a touch. The fish was hooked. I thought it was a salmon, but it was only a grilse—or "gilse," as Tom Purdie would have called it. Half an hour later and I was fast again. This fish was lively and soon showed itself to be a small salmon. Ten minutes sufficed for its exhaustion, and it was duly knocked on the head. I had seen one or two biggish fish slung at the bottom of the pool, and as I covered the lower part I expected a "draw" every minute. But the fly was ignored.

A few drops of rain made me look anxiously at the sky. It was black as pitch up Callander way, but I reflected that even if it did rain the water would be fishable for most of the day at any rate. But I was glad when the rain stopped, although the sky remained gloomy and the light perceptibly darkened. The conditions were now more suitable for spinning and I put up a two-and-a-half-

inch artificial. I had practically fished out the pool before getting a response. This was obviously a salmon of some size and he fought strongly. My luck held. This fish was close on 20 lb. I was soon back in the water, and before long had another "pull," but there was no connection. A few minutes later, however, I felt the slightest touch, and, striking, thought I was into a sea trout. In a few moments, however, I saw that I was into a small salmon, but the hook lost its grip. Still, 'three salmon on the bank and it was only twelve o'clock. Truly a good beginning!

All the time I was anxious to get away down to the Chapel Pool, which I knew would fish to the tail. In passing, I had a few casts in the Ardoch Pool with the minnow, but the water was too dark for my liking, so I wasted no time there, but passed on to the Chapel Pool, where, some years previously, I had the experience of hooking six salmon within an hour without landing any of them.

I knew exactly where I was going to get a fish, but my information was at fault! I had worked my way well down to the bottom, a cast and a step, covering every inch of the holding water, and yet I had not had a touch. And I had not seen a fish show. "Surely," I thought, "there is something wrong here." I considered my fly. There was nothing wrong there. It suited the conditions. And presently I got into a fish. It was a quiet creature, and after a few runs I led it up the river, and so to the gaff. But now I changed to a smaller fly—because the water was smoother and of a slower pace. Restarting at the spot where I had hooked the fish, I had only covered a few yards when I was fast in a salmon of a very different sort. What a pothor! Several wild rushes were followed by the fish throwing itself out of the water a bright 20-pounder and desirable. I was most anxious to get this fish up the pool because I was

wading up to the waist and could not follow the salmon if it went down. An exciting ten minutes passed—ten minutes of constant activity on the part of the salmon. On one occasion the line was badly drowned. The fish leapt twenty yards above me and my rod was pointing downstream—a dangerous situation, but my luck—that is to say the hook—held and salmon and angler were once more on level terms. The moment the salmon showed signs of quieting I led it up the pool, thirty yards or so—strange it is how the salmon will follow the angler like a sheep, yielding to a gentle, steady pressure. I was thoroughly pleased with myself when I had that fish well and truly grassed and its final quietus given. Five salmon killed and it was but two o'clock. Returning to the water once more, I made three casts and was fast in another fish, but on this occasion the hook came away after a few seconds.

I retraced my steps to the top of the pool and quickly swallowed lunch. Although it was only two o'clock it was becoming dark. The atmosphere was murky. I felt that the fly rod should be laid aside and if I was to get another fish from the Chapel Pool—which has tall trees on both banks—it would have to be with the minnow. I therefore took up the spinning rod and began at the choicest part of the pool. At the third throw I felt a touch, and striking, found myself in a good fish. This salmon was of the dour sort. It did not lie down, but its runs were slow. I knew it was a fish of size and when it showed a broad silvery side I put it down at 20 lb. Ten minutes passed before it came to the top and began those slow and vastly exciting flanking movements which indicate failing strength. Shortly afterwards the gaff was brought into action and salmon number six was in safe keeping. I fished right down the pool after that quickly, nothing more was doing.

I was now anxious to get back to the Castle Pool, which I knew would get all the light that was going. What a trek that was—weighed down by a large creel, waterproofs, and various other impedimenta, with an 18 foot fly rod (now dismantled), a spinning rod and three salmon, weighing in the aggregate about 50 lb. When I reached the Castle Pool—a walk of five or six hundred yards—more or less tottering, I found a friend playing a salmon. It was a dour fish and twenty minutes of precious time passed before I got a chance to put the cleik into it. That done, I wasted not a moment in getting into the lower part of the pool.

But first I changed to a larger minnow, a Brown and Silver of three and a half inches. I also made up a new wire trace—a job of a few seconds. Did something warn me that I was going to get into a really heavy fish? Possibly, because the occasions on which I resort to a wire trace are few in number. I dropped the minnow into calm deep water at the far side of the pool, wading as deeply as I dared. In a few seconds the lure was seized. I had no doubt whatever about the size and quality of this fish. Its movements could only be described as savage. With one rush it had gone twenty yards down the pool, much too near the foot for my liking. With horror, I suddenly realized that I had left my gaff on the bank. I thought the fish was going out of the pool. Now, in the conditions prevailing, it would have been nothing less than madness to go after the fish, because the water was deep and dark and on each side of an island at the foot of the pool there was a turbulent stream which would be impossible to negotiate in the high state of the river. But I must have the gaff.

I screamed to my friend, "Get my gaff, quick. The fish is going down." He put the gaff over my shoulders and I breathed more freely. I slackened off and the

fish stopped running. I then tried to walk it up. The fish responded and then happened one of the most thrilling things I have ever seen in salmon fishing. The fish began to move slowly upstream of its own will. It passed me. I applied a strain, pulling from below to induce it to continue its upward journey. Without a pause it went upward. We traced its progress through the gloom by the tiny wave thrown up just where the line cut into the water. Twenty, forty, sixty, eighty, a hundred yards that noble salmon forced its way against the swift current. I was intensely relieved for there was now ample room, I thought, to play the fish in safety. Vain hope! A series of short powerful rushes, downstream and across, and the fish was back to the place where I had hooked it. I dare not try to stop it in spite of the steel trace, for at the back of my mind was the knowledge that my line was none too sound.

I coaxed the fish up the pool again. A ding-dong battle followed for the next ten minutes. I had not made any impression at all on the strength of the fish, although it had been running all the time. I knew this by the powerful way it tore across the pool whenever it felt shoaling water. At last it came to the top and gave a mighty swirl. Was it weakening? The answer came a moment later when with one terrific rush it crossed the river to the far side and ran down the pool for 30 yards. It then stopped. And at that moment the hook lost its hold.

Did I go frantic? Did my heart sink into my boots? I did not and it did not! Believe it, or believe it not, I did not grudge that fish its liberty. Indeed I was thankful that the line had not broken. I did not like to think of that gallant fighter with a hook, trace, and yards of line trailing from its jaw. The fish had provided a splendid ending to a splendid day.

What was its weight? I *think* something between

35 and 40 lb. I do not *know*. I don't want to know. It's well to leave something to the imagination. The weights of the six fish—the best day's salmon fishing I have ever had on the Teith—were as follows :— $20\frac{1}{4}$ lb., $19\frac{1}{2}$ lb., $18\frac{1}{2}$ lb., 9 lb., 7 lb., and $4\frac{3}{4}$ lb.—an average of thirteen and one-sixth pounds. And I had hooked other three fish. Nine salmon hooked, six landed. My friend had one fish. I learned later that three had been killed further down making ten for the day—a record for Blair Drummond and probably for the river.

CHAPTER XXV

QUEER THINGS HAPPEN FISHING !

IN October, 1935, a 45 lb. salmon was killed on the River Forth a few miles above Stirling in extraordinary circumstances, perhaps unique.

The angler was fishing with an artificial minnow. A large salmon had heaved its bulk out of a large pool. The angler cast his minnow across the pool and slowly reeled it in. Half-way across he felt something stop the lure. He struck. *Birr!* went the reel. The minnow was small, the line was thin—and the fish had been foul-hooked !

For an hour and a half the battle waged. The fish was exhausted. It was drawn into the side so that it might be gaffed. But the current was swift, and the fish was so deep in the body that the angler could not get it close enough. He put on more strain. The line broke and the fish disappeared.

Half a dozen people had seen that fish and how desirable it was. The air was filled with words of sympathy and cuss words as well. Dashed hard luck—but wait !

A few minutes later another angler was walking along the bank when he saw a large salmon lying close to the side, twenty yards below the place where the "monster" had been lost. Out went the gaff, in came the fish. The lost salmon! The hook was still sticking in its back, or to be precise, in its back fin.

Just the sort of story which makes the scoffer say, "Tell us another!" Don't mind if I do.

An angler was fishing in the Tweed not far from Dryburgh Abbey. He was spinning a minnow mounted on a tackle with two small treble hooks. He hooked a sea trout. Now, a sea trout has this peculiarity—it is almost as much in the air as in the water when it is being played. This sea trout was a fine fish—round about the 6 lb. mark. It fought—and jumped—magnificently. This way and that it tossed itself about the river.

Suddenly its tactics changed. Instead of hop-step-and-jumping here, there, and everywhere, its runs became dour and slow. The angler was mystified. But the mystery was solved twenty minutes later, when an exhausted fish was drawn into the side.

It was not a sea trout, but a salmon of 12 lb.—and it was hooked in the back! What had happened was this. The sea trout had passed over the salmon, and one of the hooks had caught in its back. This was lucky for the sea trout, because it enabled it to escape. It was lucky for the angler, because he got a bigger fish; but I will give long odds that the salmon did not like it.

An English angler fishing for trout on a Scotch loch caught a fish weighing several pounds. When the fish was opened, it didn't begin to sing, but a wedding ring was found in its tummy. The hotel-keeper was curious to see if he could trace the owner of the ring. A paragraph was inserted in various newspapers. Among the replies received was one from a lady, who said she

wondered if this could be the ring which she had lost while bathing at a South of England pleasure resort!

Some will say that women are queerer than fish. The following suggests that it may be so.

The writer was fishing for trout in the Tay, and killed a small salmon of 12 lb. When he took it up to the hotel a lady, who was living there on holiday, came along with her child.

"Oh, mummy!" said the child, "look at the lovely fish!"

The lady said: "What kind of a fish is it?"

"A salmon," I replied incredulously.

"Oh, *that's* a salmon!" she said.

She was an English lady.

An angler was spinning for trout in a loch. His lure was a Devon minnow, silver in colour and in length one-and-a-quarter inches. He was using the thread-line outfit and is not given to story-telling. Besides there was a witness.

The angler hooked a trout. He "played" it for a few minutes and then it got off. The angler reeled up, and was astonished to discover that the body part of his Devon had vanished—but not the hooks!

There were the hooks at the end of the trace and there was the trace fastened to the line, but the Devon itself had disappeared. It could not possibly have been broken, because these minnows are cast in one piece. The angler wondered for a moment if he had suddenly gone "mental," or whether something had gone wrong with his eyes.

He shouted to a friend and explained what had happened. They examined the trace carefully. A slight thickening was noticed at one part where the gut was twisted. To straighten it, the angler took the trace in his hands and pulled gently. The trace parted at

the place where it was twisted. The mystery was solved. The trace had broken while the fish was being "played," the minnow had slipped off, and the loose ends of the trace—which had been badly kinked by the spinning of the minnow—had twisted themselves together.

Incredible!—but queer things happen fishing!

One evening fishing the Tweed with fly, the writer caught a trout, a grayling, a smolt, and a *bat*. I was told the other day of an angler who, in a sea loch in the North of Scotland, had, during one outing, caught a brown trout, a mackerel, a sea trout, and a "cuddy," the said "cuddy" being a young saithe.

A man, fishing for pike, dropped the fish as he caught them into a sack. When the sack was emptied, it was found that one of the pike, which weighed 2 lb. 4 oz., had partially swallowed another pike, weighing 2 lb. 2 oz.!

Yes, queer things happen fishing!

CHAPTER XXVI

SOME THREAD-LINE EXPERIENCES

ON a wet June afternoon, the water being dead low, I thought there would be a chance of a trout, so I jumped into the car and having arrived at the scene of action, parked at the side of the road. I went down to a pool about eighty yards long and thirty-five wide where trout sometimes rise in such conditions. I made a preliminary throw over the tail just to see that the bait was spinning properly. I then threw it over some deeper water, and while I was retrieving it I saw the swirl of a salmon and felt a pull. I struck and was fast in the fish. I was not particularly pleased about it because I had no gaff, and a 2-lb. line gives one very little "law."

A small salmon of about 8 lb. jumped out of the water. I breathed more freely because, with luck, an 8-pounder is not so difficult to kill even on the lightest tackle. But the feel of the fish when it ran suggested a much heavier fish than an 8-pounder. Shortly afterwards I saw what had happened. I had hooked a larger fish and the smaller one was following it wherever it went. Sometimes the larger fish would jump and then the smaller one. After ten minutes or so the hooked fish ran up to the top of the stream where the water was divided by some small rocks. The main current was at my side, but the fish preferred to go up the smaller stream at the other side. And it lay close down behind the rocks! I was in a quandary.

The fish was about twenty yards away and was lying close under the rock. I could not lift the line over the rock because the rod was too short and the water too deep to wade. I tried stoning, but all that happened was that it lay still closer to the rocks.

After about five minutes of this nerve-racking business the fish turned downstream of its own accord and went to the bottom of the pool without stopping. This was distinctly better—until it changed its mind and again went up behind the rocks! It did not stay long there, however, and after that it swam about until it was sufficiently exhausted for me to bring it over to my side. I drew it in towards me, standing up to the knees in the water with (as it happened) my legs wide open. When I was about to grip the fish by the tail with my right hand it took fright and dashed between my legs. Did I do acrobatics? I did, lifting up my leg and shoving down the rod-point into the water! A few minutes afterwards I brought the fish over again and made no mistake this time. Let me repeat. The line had a breaking strain of 2 lb. The hook was a No. 16 treble, the rod weighed 3 oz., and the salmon 15 lb.

A "SNARED" SALMON

When I got to the river I found it in such a state that pools which take an hour or more to fish when in condition could now be covered in a few casts. Indeed, what is reckoned the best bit was quite unfishable. I went to the top of the water, intending to go over the whole stretch quickly. Two or three casts showed that it was a waste of time fishing there. Down to a long flat where there was just a chance of a fish in the shallow stream at the top, but a still greater chance of a kelt. Not a touch. I watched a kelt, which must have been very sick, cruising slowly round. It was a mass of fungus.

Down to the next stream, a bit of broken, rocky water under a cauld. I like and dislike this particular place. I like it because there is always a chance that a fish which has lately changed quarters will be lying here. I dislike it because it is full of boulders, and, as it is not very deep, or, rather, because its depth varies so much, one frequently gets "hung up." After sundry adventures of this kind—bear in mind that a catch in a rock with this light tackle usually means a break—I felt the welcome pull, and a second later a nice salmon steered along the top of the water, showing a black back and a broad, silvery side and belly. A clean fish, ye gods!

Later I began to doubt whether it was a clean fish really and not a well-marked kelt. It was sluggish, although by no means a sulker. I tickled it up with occasional chunks of rock, and these always shifted it. Fortunately, it showed a liking to go up into the strong water. My chief fear was that it would take down with a rush and get into the next stream. This would have meant my taking to the water, not that I greatly mind, but on this occasion there was no chance of getting home for a change till late at night. I must say I was

puzzled by the way the fish played, although, if anybody had told me it was foul-hooked, I would have said he was dreaming.

At last the fish took it into its head that more comfortable quarters were to be had downstream. It fell back sixty yards or so until it was lying in deepish water at the tail of the pool, and I was standing above a bush which I couldn't pass without wading deeply. I pitched in stones gently, trying to get the salmon somewhere about the tail. I thought that a touch of ginger there would send it careering upstream. It didn't. It sent it downstream instead. As it slipped over into the strong water below I took to the water also. With the corner of my eye I saw a splash of white on its back as it showed on the top for a second. "Confound it," I said, "fungus." I felt inclined to break, but reflected that since I had got wet I might as well see the thing through.

Before I got round the tree and on to the bank forty yards of line had been stripped from the reel, but fortunately the fish came to rest behind a boulder, and I got to terms with it again. The stream where it now was is shallow, and as the bank is high it was easy to see the fish. I now got a shock. I noticed that the splash of white on its back was not fungus at all but my bait—an eel tail. I further noticed that the trace was round the salmon's body. This was better, because the hooks were small. Still, a foul-hooked fish of 15 lb. or so in weight on a 6-lb. line and a 5-oz. rod—I ask you, could angler be more awkwardly placed? Further, if the fish took it into its head to go downstream again it was good-bye, for I could not possibly follow.

Fortunately, an angler was fishing this stream, and his attendant came at my signal to use the gaff if and when occasion arose. Now, to land a foul-hooked salmon on ordinary gear in a fast stream is bad enough; but

how on earth was I to get this fish broadside through the water to the bank? It took a good deal of manœuvring before the gaffer got a real chance, as the fish saw him and always sheered off. Besides, he was loath to use the gaff as he thought it was a kelt. If it wasn't a kelt, he contended, it would be showing more; which is a delusion but he held to it. At last, after about half an hour the salmon was hooked, the gaff was got in and the fish out. It was a hen salmon in fine condition, and weighed $17\frac{1}{2}$ lbs. The trace had got caught in one of the hooks, and so had held it securely.

HEAVY THREAD-LINED SALMON

The heaviest salmon of which I have authentic record as having been killed on the thread-line weighed 42 lb. It was killed on the River Forth a year or so ago in spring by a Bridge of Allan angler using a trout-size fixed-spool reel—the salmon-size fixed-spool reel had not then been invented. This angler was undoubtedly lucky. The river at the place where he hooked his fish is about 70 yards or 80 yards in width and there was nothing to prevent the fish from running out all the angler's line if it had been so minded, for the angler could not have followed it owing to the nature of the banks of the river. It is a curious coincidence that the second largest salmon of which I have information as having been killed on the thread-line was also killed on the Forth, although at a different part. The 42-pounder was caught at Craigforth, a few miles above Stirling. The salmon to which I now refer was killed at Buchlyvie.

This fish weighed 35 lb. and was killed by the Rev. D. F. M'Math, of St. David's Church, Kirkintilloch. Mr. M'Math was good enough to give me some details. The Forth where he was fishing is deep and smooth, like a

canal. On the day on which he was fishing there was good run of water following a spate. The water was dark in colour. The banks are quite clear, so that there was no difficulty in following the fish, but as it happened the salmon did not travel far, being killed within a hundred yards of the place where it was hooked.

Mr. M'Math also was using a trout-size fixed-spool reel, mounted with a gut-substitute line with a breaking strain of 6 lb. His lure was a two-inch natural minnow mounted on a small spinner. The fish was hooked at four o'clock in the afternoon, and for an hour and a half the angler did not know the size of the salmon. It sulked a good deal, and, during the time it was lying motionless on the bottom the angler lit his pipe and enjoyed a smoke! I like that touch. It savours of the contemplative recreation; but the pipe is explained by the fact that the angler did not know the size of the fish he had hooked! At the end of an hour and a half the salmon woke up, gave a fierce run, and, as Mr. M'Math puts it, "walloped" on the top.

When the angler saw that he was into something really heavy he put his pipe into his pocket! Frankly he never expected to land the fish, and one can imagine the care with which he played it. For the next half hour the fish was much more lively, and at the end of that time it was brought into the side and successfully gaffed. It was a male fish, 3 ft. 9 in. long.

IS IT A RECORD?

I met a friend coming out of a tackle shop. He said he had been buying a spinning-reel (not a fixed spool) for using light stuff, as he had got rather tired of chucking ounces of lead about.

"What have you got?" I asked.

He showed me.

"Come on back," I said; "we'll get something better."

He rather shied at the thread line outfit I introduced him to.

"Here," he said, "it's salmon I'm after, not minnows!" Still, he took the stuff away.

I had a letter from him soon afterwards. It speaks for itself.

"I was invited to have a day's fishing at the end of February on the Tweed," he writes, "and had a very nice day. I landed fifteen salmon, from 10 lb. to 23 lb. (twelve of them kelts and returned to the water), all of them on the thread-line outfit and the gut-substitute line.

"I am very pleased to say the gut-substitute line stood the test remarkably well. I never want to fish anything better. I'm satisfied; I lost two fish. One of them broke a swivel and the other broke where the line was attached to the top swivel of the trace. Both my own fault. It was well on in the afternoon, and I was getting careless and giving them too much of the butt of my 6 ft. 6 in. rod and my IX cast.

"It was very funny. When my friend and I arrived at the river the fisherman, who, I may say, is eighty-six years old and has been a fisherman all his life, came to meet us. He told us where we were to fish, so we started off to the pool. When I had got my little rod up and the line wet and the light gut trace fixed he came over to see me and said, 'What are ye goin' to do wi' that thing?' I said, 'I'm going to fish.' He said, 'What did ye bring a thing like that here for? Mind ye, if ye get into a fish an' it breaks ye, I'll maist likely say something nesty, for I'm gey short tempered.' However, he didn't say anything 'nesty.' I think he would have been pleased to see some more of them break me before

the finish, as he had followed me about with the big net all day. It was a splendid day."

TAILING A FISH IN MIDSTREAM

I went to the upper reaches of the Teith. The water here was strange to me. This is a serious disadvantage, but I thought I might see a fish or two rising. I didn't. I never saw a salmon show all afternoon, not even a kelt, which was strange. So I set to trying the likely places.

By and by I came to a streamy bit ; only a few feet deep, but I thought a small fish might be in it, and, failing that, a kelt, which would always give some sport. I put on a small golden sprat of three inches in length—a whitebait, really, which is better than the herring for the thread-line outfit. I had got half-way down the stream when I felt a fish, and, striking, firmly once or twice to mak siccar, for it took the bait very quietly, set it off on a series of dour short runs. Its action suggested that it was a kelt. Still, one never knows. It never showed, but I got a glimpse of a silvery side which raised my hopes, although kelts can be silvery too. My hopes were further raised as the fish grew more active, took longer runs, and generally became livelier.

There was, of course, a fly in the ointment. It took the form of a flat-topped boulder in midstream. If the fish got round this the rod was too short to lift the line over, and a break seemed certain. The salmon meant to get there, too, so I thought I might as well get there first. Fortunately I had on waders, and, picking my way over the rocky and pockety bed of the river, I eventually found myself in such a position that danger of a cut on the boulder was eliminated. I got the fish to come frequently within a few yards, but for the life of me I couldn't make out whether it was a clean 'un or a kelt.

The only thing to do, therefore, was to lift it out by hand when the gods willed. The opportunity didn't arise for some time, but eventually I got the fish lying quiet at my feet. Slipping my hand down slowly, I got a grip on its tail at the second or third attempt, and carried it to the boulder. It *was* a clean fish after all, and a nice one, too, although there was a nasty wound on its belly. Fourteen pounds it weighed, and it will be agreed that to tail a salmon of this size in midstream with a toy rod is—well, a performance not entirely devoid of merit.

FAIR EXCHANGE IS NO ROBBERY

I had a visit the other day from a Borderer, a keen angler for salmon. He gave me the following account of an experience he had on the Tweed. I give the tale in the "language." The incident is one of the strangest I have yet encountered. "Man" (said my friend), "ah had the queerest experience on the Tweed yae mornin'. Ah had slippit ower tae —— at daybreak tae rin the mennen ower a lie ah ken there. Man, haud yer tongue, if there's a fish in the water he's ahint that stane and ah henny passed the lie the year withoot gettin' a pull. Ah was yuisin' the nat'ral mennen on the wee rod an' was workin' doon the strong water abune the lie when ah got a pull. Ah up wi' the rod an' oot o' the water jumped a nice sea-troot. Oh, ah wad say a fish o' between fower an' five pun. What a tiger he was, just a graund fechter. 'Ye'll sune tire that gate, ma manny,' said I. A wee while later the troot gied a terrific rush up the water and suddenly ah felt a dunt—a sherp dunt juist like that (indicating just the kind of dunt it was), then the fish stoppit deid. Ah culdna understand it ava. Ah pulled this wey an' that wey. but the fish wuldna' move an inch. Then it went away like a torpedo—no

a sea-troot run ava, but a steady, dour pull. Guid goad, ses ah, what's happened noo? Well, I keepit the fish on the move as best ah cuid wi' the wee rod, and the langer he was on the mair thunnerstruck ah got. There wis nae doot at a' that ah had hookit a sea-troot and there was nae doot at a' that it wis a fish o' between fower an' five pund. There wis nae doot ayther that it had played like a sea-troot for five minutes afore it turned intae a different kind o' beast atthegither. There was nae doot ayther that ah wis as sober as a judge sin it wasna' lang licht and ah hadna' had a drappie sin afore closin' time the nicht afore. As shure as daith. Weel, efter ah had had the fish on for hauf an' 'oor ah said tae masel, 'This'll no dae at a'. Ye've got tae show yersel.' Sae ah gied 'im the wud guid an proper. Besides, he wis tirin'. He cam intae the side wi' the strain an' ha loot doon tae git a grip o' 'im. Ah nearly drappit. He was nae sea-troot ava but a muckle salmon foul-hookit i' the back! Then ah kenned what had happened when ah felt yon dunt. The sea-troot had run against the salmon an' strickit yin o' th' hooks intae it, had got clear itsel'!"

SOMETHING LIKE A TEST

My wife and I were spinning for trout in the Taymouth Castle waters of the Tay, the river being in flood. We were using trout-size, fixed-spool reels, $3\frac{1}{2}$ -oz. rods, 2-lb. gut-substitute lines, and small natural minnows mounted on spinners armed with No. 16 trebles. Presently I heard my wife call, "I've hooked something and can't move it." Her rod was bent double.

"It's a salmon," I shouted.

As she was a beginner so far as salmon are concerned, I took the rod. The fish was lying in a dangerous place, not more than fifteen yards above a bridge—called the

Chinese Bridge—in deep, swift water. If the fish went downstream a break was inevitable. The first essential, therefore, was to take it up the pool.

This was accomplished with surprising ease. I merely “walked” the salmon up. It followed me slowly for at least forty yards. I felt easier in my mind then. But here the water was rather turbulent. A lively ten minutes followed, the fish being very active. It began to tire. The problem was to land it. We had no gaff and the trouting nets were much too small. There was nothing for it but to tail it. I got it close to the bank on several occasions, but it sheered off whenever I knelt and put out my hand. At the third or fourth attempt, however, I got my hand round its tail and lifted it ashore. It weighed 12 lb.

CHAPTER XXVII

ENCOUNTERS

THE “SPOART”

“SOME fellies is no’ spoarts. Ye know. They tak’ onyhin.”

He was a little chap in large waders. He was spinning and his rod was long and heavy.

“This is the first tim’ Ah’ve fished here,” he confided. “Ye see that wee hoose alang there beside the brig? The gemkeeper lives there. Afore Ah started Ah went up and says, ‘Hae ye ony objection tae me haein’ a cast? Ah’m a gemkeeper masel.’ Ah wis jist tryin’m on. Ye know. He says, ‘Aye, man, an’ whaur dae *you* keep

gem about?' Says Ah, 'Ower Clyde wey.' Ye know. He jist lookit at me. 'Weel,' says he, 'ye'd better no keep ony gem ye see aboot here or there'll be trouble.' 'Aw richt,' says Ah, 'that's a bargain. Can Ah hae a cast or twa noo?' 'Aye,' says he, 'if ye tak' oot a tickut.' It cost me hauf a croon. Gees! Ye've got tae pay for yer fishin' here. Hauf a croon! Ye can fish the Clyde for a hale year for that an' forget tae pay. Ye know."

Presently he caught a parr. He unhooked and threw it back.

"That's a paurr," he said. "A wee saumon. Ye know. They tell me there's saumon in this river. Ah'm no fishin' for saumon. If Ah catched yin Ah wid pit it back. Ah'm a troot fisher. Ye need a big road for birlin' the minna. Ye know."

He hooked another parr.

"Gees! There's naethin' but blinkin' paurr in this blinkin' river. Some fellies tak' paurr. If the keeper comes along they say, 'Whit's paurr?' Honest. Gees! Onybody wid ken a paurr. They've got wee doats on thir side. Ye know. Fancy killin' fish that size! Some fellies will kill onyhin. Ah met a bloke on the Clyde last week. 'Dune onyhin?' Ah says. 'Eleeven,' says he, but he wudnae show his basket. When a bloke'll no show his tak' ye ken he's got naethin' but sprats. Mind ye, Clyde troots is daum hard tae catch. Onybody that can kill ten pun' o' troots aff'n the Clyde can fish. Ah've had ma twelve-pun' monys a tim.' Gees, anither paurr! Fancy paurr takin' the minna like that!"

The parr was returned.

"Some fellies tak' troots that size on the Clyde. They're no spoarts. Ye know. The minna's the thing tae tak' the big troots. But Ah'll tell ye sumhin better'n the minna. The bairdie. Ah've got a bottlefu' in ma

basket. Ah'm keepin'm for the airle mornin'. Yon's the tim' for the bairdie.

"That wiz a troot that tim'. Ah ken b'the wey it grupput. It's goat aff. Ye know.

"They tell me there's saumon in this hole. Ah'll likely hook yin in the airle mornin'. But Ah wid pi' it back. It's the spoart Ah'm wantin', no the fish. Ye know. When diz the keeper come doon tae see yir basket here? Gees! Ye wid think the troots in some wa'ers wiz made o' goald. Ye know.

"That's a troot! Aw! it's ower wee! Five inches. Back ye go, ma mannie. Fancy fillin' yir basket wi' troots that size. When the heid's aff and the guts is oot there's naethin' left tae fry. Ye know.

"Oh, it's the spoart, troot fishin'. Ah doant suppose there'll be onyhin daein' here till the airle mornin'. Yon's the tim' for birlin' the minna! But thae wee yins! Gees! Sprats!"

(Briskly) "That's a troot this tim! Aye, nae paurr about that! Seeven inches!"

He measured it carefully against a mark on the butt of his rod.

"Six'n-a-hauf! Kent ut! It's a daud on the nut for you, ma mannie!"

He slew the babe with a sharp rap on the handle of his rod and dropped it into his capacious basket.

Sprats!

Rats!

SING A SONG OF NINEPENCE

He was a little chap, tanned and hard. Rather seedy, with blue eyes. I noticed the eyes particularly. They were bits of blue in a field of brown. I encountered him when I was engaged in a curious occupation—at least

it must have seemed mighty curious to the non-angler. I was washing minnows!—trying to get rid of a formaliney smell.

As I say, I was washing minnows when I noticed the blue-eyed stranger. He was surveying me, somewhat shyly, I thought. I was "at work" in the yard of the hotel, using a garage hose liberally on the minnows—a good gross—spread over the concrete paving on which cars are washed.

When he saw that I saw him the stranger smiled brightly and came forward. He said: "I wass thinking it wass worms you wass washing."

That made me look at him more closely. He may have sensed that I was turning him over in my mind—these Gaels are queer chaps and it doesn't do to think too much when they've about—for he added, "for the fishing."

I have heard that some anglers do wash their worms "for the fishing," though I don't know why. A sort of fetish perhaps. Anyhow, my Gaelic visitor thought—or said he thought (which is rather a different matter) that I was washing worms for the fishing. He stood watching me for a little in silence, then he sprang—a surprise in the most guileless way imaginable. He said, "Is that what they call salmon roe?"

That made me look at him again. He was smiling brightly. He went inside the garage and had a look round. "It iss a nice caar," he said, "and nice fishing rods too. I know a little about fishing myself, but I haff never seen salmon roe. It iss a deadly bait, they tell me."

I looked him over again and he smiled at me happily. I thought to myself "Is it possible that we have here an adult male who has not only never seen salmon roe but *has never seen a minnow?*"

"These are minnows," I said, making a complete fool of myself no doubt.

"So *these* iss minnows," he said, "I haff heard of them. Do you fish for salmon with them?"

"You can," I said. "But these are for trout."

"Oh, yess, inteed," he said.

I went on with my minnow-washing as he stood watching me. Suddenly he said something with extraordinary rapidity. It was "foreign" to me. There was fire in it. It was liquid too. It was intensely musical. The last word sounded like "galliach"—at any rate, there was a "gall" in it. It occurred to me at once that he was asking me if I was a Gael. I am not (to my grief). Perhaps he knew all the time that I was not a Gael, but he was asking me if I spoke Gaelic, for when I said "I haven't the gift," he replied, somewhat sadly I thought, "There are not many with both languages."

I went on with my minnow-washing. Presently he said, very politely—"Can I haff a pint of beer?"

"I don't know if the bar is open," I said as politely, "but you can at least ask." (The said bar was within fifteen paces from where we were standing.)

"No, no!" he said, "what I mean iss"—here he stammered somewhat—"can I haff a pint of beer? I am very fond of a class of beer on a warm day like this."

Then I saw his drift. I said rather bluntly—"You mean you want me to pay for a glass of beer for you." I said it so directly that it occurred to me I had hurt his feelings. These Gaels are so sensitive. I feel that I might have made him feel that he was begging, whereas all that had happened was that a highland gentleman had asked for a slight refreshment. Never having purchased a pint of beer, I was somewhat at a loss. He must have sensed my difficulty (remember he was a Gael)

for he uttered with the utmost simplicity the one word—"Ninepence."

I gave him the money with pleasure. In order not to wound his feelings I did not look at him as I gave it to him. I turned my head away. When I looked round again he had disappeared. I could not believe that any mortal man could cover that short distance to the bar with such incredible rapidity. But indubitably he had gone.

Now, I am a mere Lowlander—a species for whom, I believe, the true Highlander has a supreme contempt—and what I would like to know is whether my blue-eyed visitor was really in earnest when he asked me if a minnow was salmon roe? After due reflection I have come to the conclusion that he was pulling my leg!

TALE OF A KELT

I was playing a kelt when a young man came up and showed the greatest interest in the proceedings. He was a good-looking, hefty young man of possibly five and twenty, with a most attractive swagger. He had a neat little black moustache and short curly hair. I put him down as a soldier on furlough taking a stroll by the river.

As I say, he was most interested in the playing of the kelt. I asked him if he thought he could lift it out by the tail. He said that he would try and asked me to lead the fish downstream for 50 yards, where the water was shallower. He made quite a good job of the tailing. While the fish was lying on the bank—a kelt of about 20 lbs., very silvery and well mended—the following conversation took place:

THE STRANGER: "What kind of fish is that?"

MYSELF : " That's a salmon kelt."

THE STRANGER : " What's a salmon kelt ? "

MYSELF : " A salmon kelt is a spawned salmon. It must be returned to the river by law."

THE STRANGER : " But that's a fine fish ! Can't you eat it ? "

MYSELF : " Oh, yes. Some people prefer kelt to clean fish—it isn't so heavy. But the law says kelts must be returned so that one has to go back."

THE STRANGER (*indignantly*) : " Well, I think it's a damned shame. Will you not give me this fish, mister ? I am unemployed and my wife and kids would be glad to have it to eat."

I was touched by the appeal and the result was that after some further persuasive argument the stranger won. The fish was so exhausted that it was as good as dead and it is bad for the river to return a dead fish to the water—(so I told myself). I told the man that he must come back for the kelt after dark. This he promised to do.

He took the fish to a small sidestream and concealed it under the bank. Thereafter, he "went his ways" and I continued fishing after refusing an offer that he should remain in case I caught some more kelts.

A few hours later I was taking lunch when I saw the stranger coming down the river on the other bank. He gave me a glorious wave of the hand when he passed. To my astonishment the next minute he was wading across the river, having selected the only place which provided a safe passage—the river being in spate. It occurred to me that this young man certainly knew his way about ! He came up the bank and passed me. As he passed he said airily :

" Well, I'll away and lift the kelt."

"Good Heavens," I said, staggered, "you can't do that, it's broad daylight."

"That's all right," he replied, "*there's only one bailee on the river just now and he's away for his dinner. It's as safe as the bank.*"

Saying which, and without so much as by your leave, he sauntered over to the sidestream where the fish was hidden. When he came down again in a few minutes I could not see the fish but there was a monstrous bulge right round the bottom of his jacket. The kelt had been put inside a poacher's pocket kept for just such a purpose.

As he passed me again he said: "It's not the first kelt I've taken away from this river."

Did I feel "small?" I ask you!

THE SUPER-ANGLER

As the train ran along the banks of the river I found myself speculating as to the number, size, and quality of the trout that might be in it. That is the worst—or best—of being an angler. One thinks of a river not in terms of water but of fish. "This little stream," I thought, "looks distinctly trouty. I wouldn't wonder if it's full of fish. Mostly small, no doubt, four to the pound; a half-pounder a big 'un." As the train glided on, disclosing charming vistas and nice stretches of river, I made up my mind that I would come here and fish some day.

Presently the train drew up at a station and a young fellow came into the compartment. He had a fishing creel over his shoulder and a rod in his hand. His wife—a charming young person—was at the door, and she handed into the carriage another creel, with the admonition—"Now, don't come home until they are *both* filled."

I confess I received a shock. I have killed in my time quite a number of trout. Yea, I have taken as many as thirty trout at a fishing, thereby acquiring a certain reputation amongst my friends. But I have never yet had occasion to carry two creels, each of which could hold comfortably twenty pounds of fish.

I looked at the young man and at the insatiable lady. I came to the conclusion that they were newly-weds—an idyllic state when anything seems possible. Still, to kill 40 lb. of trout at an outing seemed a tall order. Clearly the young man before me was a super-angler in the flesh.

How did he do it? 'That's what I wanted to find out.

"Good fishing hereabouts?" I asked genially.

"Rotten!" was the decisive reply.

My wonder grew, for if two creelfuls of trout represented rotten sport what, in heavens' name, must good sport be like! I began to suspect this young man. The rod which he carried was probably a blind. No doubt he would fill his creels by the use of lime, dynamite, nets, or other nefarious practice.

"I'm afraid you're hard to please," I said. "Personally, I count 10 lb. of trout a highly exceptional day's fishing."

"Ten pounds!" he exclaimed aghast. "Why, if I get half a dozen trout I think no small beer of myself!"

"Oh, and it takes two creels to carry half a dozen trout, does it?" I asked severely. I had collared him.

To my surprise the young man burst out laughing. He grew red in the face laughing, and, as I don't like to be laughed at, I suppose I grew red in the face, too.

"Excuse me," he said, when his laughing fit had passed, "but this is too funny. I must tell my wife about it when I go home. Do you think she meant that I was not to go back till I had filled the two creels with

TROUT? Ho, ho, ho! It would take me two years to do that. It isn't trout at all that I'm after, it's EGGS! You see, my wife pickles about forty dozen every spring when they are cheap, and I get the job to go round the farms collecting them. I'm merely taking my rod in case there's a chance of having half an hour's fishing!"

"Oh, I say"—he started laughing again—"did you really think I was going to fill these two creels with trout?"

Next time I see a man with a fishing basket I will conclude that he is gathering coals or something.

CATCHING A GHILLIE

"Haff you not a Creen Highlander? . . . You cannot kill fush in this riffer, whateffer, if you have not a Creen Highlanter."

No, I hadn't a Green Highlander, or a Blue Highlander, or a Highlander of any other colour. What is more, I wasn't a bit sorry, and if he hadn't been my ghillie I would have told him so. But when one is new to a river one must be discreet, for ghillies have been known to send stiff-necked Southrons home fishless.

Of course, this special fly business is all rot. Every fisher of experience will tell you that, but no fisher of judgment says so to his ghillie. So I regretted that my last Green Highlander had been lost in a monstrous salmon. The tyrant was mollified. Was not this Southron as clay in the potter's hand? "Well, well," he said, "if you will giff me your box I will choose a fly that *may* kill a fush—but it is only a Creen Highlander, whateffer, that will kill in this riffer!" He went over my flies with many headshakings.

"What about a Jock Scott?" I ventered.

"The Chock Scott iss a coot fly . . . but it will not

kill in this watter whateffer. There wass a chentleman came here and he would fush with nothing but his Chock Scot, although I tolt him that it wass no coot. But he wass above taking advice that one . . . and he went home without a fush . . . and after he had gone I went ofer the watter with a Creen Highlander and kilt four salmon! Yess, yess!"

"And serve him right! . . . What about that Black Doctor?"

He ignored me. "You *haff* no Creen Highlanders," he said at last. "I will go up to Lachie's for one or two."

I thought the farce had gone far enough, and said gently but firmly that I would pick the fly myself. I selected a creation of my own. He looked at it sadly.

"You will not kill a fush with *THAT*," he said.

And it looked like it. It was well on in the afternoon before a salmon seized the fly. While the fish was being played the ghillie spoke never a word, but as he gaffed it and lifted it on to the bank he said with supreme scorn: "There iss always a daft one or two knocking about!"

I didn't even produce the flask.

Ten minutes later I got into another fish which the ghillie gaffed without a remark. "Another daft one," I said. There was no reply.

Soon afterwards I got into a third fish, but the hold gave. And before the day was out I hooked and lost other two fish but landed a third. A great day. When I was preparing to leave the ghillie was looking rather uncomfortable. At last he said, "What iss it that you call that fly?" He said nothing more at the time, but just as the car was leaving he grew desperate. "Well, well," he said. "It iss a coot fly that one and I should be fery pleased to accept one of her!"

But this fish wasn't rising!

AN ANGLER MEETS HIMSELF

When you come to think of it, the angler is a funny fellow! He has two distinct personalities—his angling self and his ordinary self. I have fished for more than a quarter of a century, and only discovered that the other day. This is how it happened:—

I began to get restive in the office. I began to catch trout "in my mind"—the only cure was a day on the Clyde.

Thinking it over, I find that from the moment I decided to go fishing my angling self possessed me. That is the only explanation I can give of the fact that I went to a tackle shop and spent five guineas on a new rig out. Apart from waders, brouges, a bag, and a new line, I got half a gross of flies.

Don't tell me my fly-book is crammed with flies already; flies of more than one season old should never be used. Don't trust them. They have probably a fatal speck of rust at the barb. You may lose the trout of your life; an old fly may send you in sorrow to the grave. I have told myself that each spring, although I have not yet got the big fish.

* * * * *

No doubt my friend the tackle merchant was pleased to get my five guineas. He is a suave, genial gentleman, and if he would only give me back half of what I have paid him for flies which I have never used, I might go to the South of France—when the war is over. But he won't.

My extravagance in flies is fully justified, for in fishing the fly is everything. You need many kinds of flies, for it is a tragedy of tragedies to get among feeding trout and find them gorging on the very fly you haven't got. The lack of such a fly may cost you the fish of your life.

Don't risk it. Thus spake Satan. So I laid in a stock of fresh flies and went home rejoicing.

* * * * *

The great day at last arrived. . . . When I got out at Abington it was raining. I thought it might clear up. It didn't. It rained in torrents. However, I started fishing. The line stuck to the rod and wouldn't cast properly; and the rain ran up the sleeve of my rain-proof jacket.

Then the river began to turn muddy; and muddier. Then it began to rise. I saw it was hopeless fishing any longer. My total catch was two small trout and one big one which got off as I was about to put the net under it. It was really a big trout but I lost it.

* * * * *

Immediately I got to the station my ordinary personality ousted my angling personality, and I realised that that day on the Clyde had cost me about £8. Of course the things I had bought would last a long time, but £8 takes a deal of earning. It was then, when my angling personality was confronted by my ordinary personality, that I made the startling discovery that we anglers are very funny fellows!

SONG AND ECHO

If one doesn't say too much one may learn things. In a train in which I was travelling were a couple of miners—one elderly and the other a youngster—using the leisure of a strike to get some fishing. The train was running beside a stream which I fancy I know as well as most, but I "didn't let on." One of the miners enlarged on it thuswise: "Plenty troots in that watter, but dour. Biggest yin ever ah got oot o't wee'ed three

pun'. (To the young one: Didn't it wee three pun', Tammy?—Aye, it wee'd three pun'.) Ah wis fishin' the deed mennem, bit catched nothin' bit eels. Ah got fed up catchin' eels, so I pit a worm on a bait hook and threw in. The worm didna reach the bottom afore it wis taken. The fish ran up and doon and doon and up. Ah kent it wis a gude yin. Ma net wis ower sma' for it, so Ah played it deed and gruppit it wi' ma hanky roon' ma haun'. Didn't ah, Tammy?" "Aye, ye gruppit it wi' a hanky roon' yer haun'. . . . Last spring ah got a braw fish oot o't tae. Ah hookit it wi' the flee, and it jumpit, and ah saw it wis a saumon. It wis strong, ah tell ye. It rushed up and doon and doon and up for twenty minutes afore ah got it tae the bank. When ah pit doon my haun' tae grip it it gaed off again. Ah saw it wis a gude yin—like a shillin' and weel filled. Says I, 'Ma mannies, if ye come in again ah'll nick ye.' It played for anither twenty mennits. Didn't it play for another twenty meenits, Tammy?" "Aye, ye played it for anither twenty meenits." Then ah got it in again and gruppit it wi' a hanky roon' ma haun'. I kent fine it wis a kelt, and ah shid hae pit it back, but says, I 'Ah'll risk it.' So I poppit it intae ma bag!"

CHAPTER XXVIII

POACHERS' TALES AND OTHERS

TWO watchers, late in the year, when the rivers were full of spawning fish, were watching at a road-end near some houses. They knew poachers had been at work, and they were watching the houses in case some of them should try to sell their catch. They had lain

hidden in some whins on a small hill commanding a good view of the roads, and after an unsuccessful wait of several hours had decided to quit. It was just getting dark, and they were about to rise when a man—a well-known poacher—was observed to be making for the cottages. It was soon quite dark, and the two watchers stole down to the houses. Most Scots' village houses have a barrel outside the door to catch rain-water. The two watchers took up a position behind a water-barrel at the last house and waited. By and by they heard a step approaching the door. There was a knock. The door was opened, and the following conversation was overheard:

POACHER: "Can Ah sell ee a fish, mistress? 'Tsa guid yin. Twunty pun'. Ah'll gie ye it for twal' shillin's."

WOMAN: "Na, na. Ah durstna' tak' it. The bylies nicht fin' oot."

POACHER: "Hoots, woman! Ye're safe eneuch! There's nae bylies here aboots!"

WOMAN: "Na! Na! Ah durstna' tak' it!"

POACHER: "Ah tell ee what. Ah'll gie a bargain o't. Ten shillin's."

WOMAN: "Ah tell ee, Ah durstna' tak' it. Ah'm feart tae tak' it."

POACHER: "Hoots! Ye wudna' hae me cairry a muckle fish like that a' the road tae Gaulay (Galashiels). Ah'll gie ye't for seven an' six." (Holds up the fish by the tail.)

WOMAN: "Ah wudna tak' it s'posin' ye gied me't for naethin'." (Makes to close the door. At this moment one of the river-watchers rises from behind the barrel, stretches out his hand and grips the fish.)

WATCHER: "Ah'll tak' it, Johnnie!"

POACHER (startled looking at the wacther): "Guid goad!" (Then the humour of the situation striking

him: to the woman): "Hey, never mind, mistress, Ah've got a customer."

* * * * *

A party of snatchers made a ploy to harry the reds of Tweed. They went down by train, a journey of four miles or so, and lay up till about midnight. The coast was clear, and they soon took as many fish as they could carry. Each man took his well-filled sack and they set off on the long tramp home. They arranged that they would get back to town about six o'clock, when the police were changing shift. They were passing over a small bridge which spanned a stream when they virtually ran into the arms of a policeman. They dropped the sacks and ran for it. One of the poachers was caught and duly "booked." Later, when telling of their adventure in their favourite howff, he was heard to exclaim: "Dod! If they had jumpit on ma back as Ah left the waitter Ah wadna hae minded. But tae git us efter we had carried the fish fower mile! It was a fair skunner!"

* * * * *

Late one winter afternoon a man called at a cottage near Tweed—to be precise, at the village of Newstead, a mile down from Melrose. He carried a sack on his back and looked very tired. Out of the sack was sticking a branch of a tree. He asked the woman at the cottage if she had a shed in which he could put his sack of firewood till he went up to the village to get a cart to take it up to Melrose. He was out of work, he said, and had been gathering driftwood to sell in the town. The woman was warm-hearted, and not only showed him where to stow the wood, but gave him a cup of tea. The man went away, and soon afterwards returned with a van. He stowed the sack in the van, covered it up carefully, and went away, heartily thanking the good

woman for her kindness. Next day the lady had two visitors. They were river watchers. They asked her if she had seen any poachers about. She had not, she said. They told her that a number of fish which had been on the redds the previous day were no longer there. Was she *sure* she had seen nobody. She replied that the only body she had seen was a puir callant who had left in her shed a sack of firewood till he went up to the village to get a cart to take it away. The watchers went off. A few days later they called again. They wanted to tell the "gude wife" that she had been aiding and abetting poachers, because the sack of sticks was a sack of salmon. She was the more inclined to believe them because in the interval of the "bylies" calls she had received a mysterious "cut" of a "fish."

* * * * *

This woman (as she told me herself) had once done a bit of poaching on her own. But never again, because it went round the country-side and she had to stand more chaffing about it than she liked. There had been a very high flood. When the spate receded it left large pools of water in a field beside the river. At the first opportunity she went out to collect a store of firewood which lay scattered all along the banks. In one of the pools left by the flood she saw something splashing. On going to investigate she found it was a large salmon. Not only so, but the pool was stiff with dead fish, all of large size. She could not resist. First she went in for the live salmon and after a struggle secured it. It weighed about 30 lb. After that she carried to her house half a dozen of the biggest fish she could see. She thought the fish could be cured and kept for winter food. But after a meal or two, she said, they got "fair seek" of the sight of salmon and the rest of the fish were buried

in the garden. And glad she was to see the last of them, for she was terrified lest the "bylies" should get to hear of her ploy.

* * * * *

Two watchers were going along a roadway near Hawick. One of them kicked something soft lying among some broom bushes growing at the side of the road. It was the merest chance. Stooping down, the watcher discovered a sack, and it was half full of sea trout. Obviously some poacher had hidden it in order to wait until it was dark before taking it into the town. So the watchers hid nearby, knowing that the poacher would come sooner or later to get his catch. They had not lain long until a man came on the scene, searched about a little and lifted the sack. The watchers sprang out of their hiding-place. It was a clean catch and no doubt about it.

In due course the poacher appeared before the Sheriff. He pleaded not guilty, and the case went to trial. The man denied strenuously that the fish belonged to him. He was severely cross-examined in the witness-box, but stuck to his story. Eventually the Sheriff asked how he could persist in denying that the fish were his when he had been seen to search for the bag and was actually caught with it in his possession. "Weel, ma lord," was the startling reply, "that wisna the bag Ah was lookin' for. It was a seck o' salmon Ah wis efter."

* * * * *

A water-bailie was standing at the corner of a street in Galashiels speaking to a policeman. It was six o'clock in the morning and the mill workers were going to work. Presently a man came in sight carrying on his head a clothes basket apparently full of clothes.

"Here's a catch for ye," said the "bobby."

"It looks gie like it," was the reply. "But, man, if

the basket *should* be fu' o' claes thae mill worker'll torment the life oot o' me."

The thought was too much for him, and he let the man pass. Shortly afterwards the man turned round, his foot got on a "slide," and went sprawling. Off his head went the basket into the middle of the roadway and out tumbled half a dozen salmon. The watcher ran along and helped the man to his feet.

"Guid sakes!" he said, "what did ye look round for? Ye wald hae got away wi't!"

"Man," was the reply, "Ah was juist waitin' tae feel ye'r haund grip ma shouther, an' Ah couldna bide it ony longer. Daum thae callants an' thir slides."

* * * * *

The hero of this incident was out of work and wanted a fish to sell. It was summer and as salmon were scarce they fetched a good price. He knew that two or three fish were lying in the neck of a certain stream, and taking his trout rod, went down to catch one of them.

On the way to the river he passed two river watchers. One said, "Where are ye off tae, Jock?" "Oh, juist efter a wheen troots," was the reply. Shortly afterwards he hooked one of the salmon, played it, and killed it. But what was he to do with it? That was the problem, for well he knew that the watchers would soon be down to see if he was getting any "troots." After considering he decided the best plan was to go home at once—with the salmon. He put it into his baskst and went away up the road. The "bylies" were on their way down to the river. "Hullo, Jock," said one of them. "Ye're sune back." "Aye," said Jock, "Ah'm gaun up for me huick-buick (hood-book). Ah've left it in the gairden!" He got past.

* * * * *

A poacher cleeked out a fish in broad daylight and hid it in his poacher's pocket—which extended all the way round the bottom of his jacket. On his way to the town he had to pass over a bridge spanning a mill race. Two watchers were standing on the bridge. They started chaffing the poacher, who was a bit of a character. "Had any fish lately?" asked one of them. "Aye," was the perfectly truthful reply. "Ah got a guid yin half an oor sin." "Where hae you plankit it?" "That's for you tae find oot." Saying which the poacher calmly hoisted himself on to the dyke.

Continuing their fun, one of the watchers suddenly seized the poacher by the legs and gave him a cant over the bridge. "Ah'll pit ye in the waitter if ye dinna tell me!" he said. "Guid sakes, ca' canny, man!" cried the poacher, who thought it was all over. "It's bad enuch tae kill a fish, but it's waur tae kill a man." His good humour disarmed the baillies, and shortly afterwards they went away, as did the poacher—with his fish.

* * * * *

A poacher had a good haul, and was carrying the fish along the street in a bath on his head. He ran into a policeman, and as he had had previous unpleasant encounters with him, he thought his number was up. But he put a bold face on it, opening the ball by saying, "Man, we had great sport last nicht. Ye should hae been doon the haugh, ye would hae got us clean. We got acht (eight) guid yins, and they're a' in this bath on ma heid." The policeman laughed. "Ah'm no leecin'. Ah'm tellin' ye they're in this bath. Ah'll show ye them." Convinced that his leg was being pulled, the policeman passed on; and once more the poacher got off with the spoil.

* * * * *

"Dod, I had a gie queer experience on Ettrick yin winter's efternin. Ah kent o' a stream abune Ettrick Brigend where hauf a dizen pair o' fish were spawnin', sae as Ah wis idle at the time, Ah thocht Ah would gang and lift twa or three o' them wi' the jigger.

"Ah waited till the edge o' derk afore Ah sterted, an' as Ah hadna muckle time Ah wis gie intent. Man, Ah clean forgot aboot an auld billy goat that fed wi' the beese (cattle) in a field at ma back. Ah had juist got a fish oot an' was tryin' for a kipper when Ah got the awfiest dunt. Ah got sic a gliff that Ah drappit the rod and was gaun tae run for't whan Ah saw the billy goat pittin' doon his heid for anither chairge. Ah chased him up the hill an' hurried back tae the waitter.

"Ah wisna long sterted whan Ah got it again, a sair yin. Ah pickit up a stane and let flee. The billy ran up the hill and Ah thocht it was gane for guid. Ah got oot the kipper and was thinkin' Ah would stop as sune as Ah got anither. There was a muckle red kipper on the redd. He lookit aboot therty pun', but it's gie hard tae judge a fish i' the waitter. But Ah couldna get the huicks stickit intil him ava. He aye moved juist as Ah was aboot tae gie the yerck. Ah got verra keen on't, an' was lookin' weel doon so that Ah could see better, when Ah got a dunt that near sent me intae the waitter. Ah drappit the rod an' roared, 'Ye muckle ugly devil, Ah'll kill ee this tim'.'

"Ah chased 'm richt up the hill. When he got tae the tap he stoppit and lookit at somethin' across the field. Ak was fair roozed an' gied him a skelp, but he juist stid an' blet (bleated), aye lookin' across the field. Ah lookit tae see what was divertin' 'im, an' near drappit, for twa bylies were creepin' on their hauns an' knees juist under the broo o' the hill! If it hadna been for that ugly auld diel o' a billy goat it would have been a

fair cop. Ah leggit it gie quick Ah can tell ee, an' left them baith the rod and fish in a present ! "

* * * * *

George was an old poacher, a handy man with a net. Mr. Jones was the owner of a stretch of good sea-trout river. One evening he went out to fish the Minister's Pool. He started at nine o'clock and fished till one. It was the month of June and was never dark. The following morning, when he was in his office in town, George called on him. He knew George ; they were friendly enemies. George said he was very thirsty and wondered if Mr. Jones would give him the price of a glass of beer. Mr. Jones told him to get to the hottest place he knew of, as quickly as possible, but George did not remove himself. He said, with a quiet smile :

" Maybe Ah could tell tha summat."

Mr. Jones hesitated. He knew George poached his water, and he had a fear that unless he succumbed to this blackmail George would see to it that he got mighty little fishing, so he gave him a couple of shillings. George said :

" Tha nearly droondit me Thursday night ! "

" What ! " roared Mr. Jones, " you lying old devil, clear out ! "

But George merely repeated " Tha didst that. Tha nearly droondit me. I was in stream at top o' Minister's Pool when Ah saw thee coomin' ower field. So Ah just laid masel' doon in stream an' jist kept ma nose above water. Tha keepit me lying there for fower 'oors and Ah was that full o' water when tha went away that Ah could hardly get oop ! "

* * * * *

Here is a story of a Border worthy well known in his day as a poacher (and a good man, too) which savours

of the miraculous. It was in the back-end, and Jock had got a job to cut a hedge near the river. The pay was poor, and he took the job because there was nothing better on offer, but as he plied the hedging knife he grew more and more discontented, for hedging is hard work, and Jock felt that he was being imposed upon. This idea so obsessed him that he threw the job over and went for a walk up the riverside. Presently he noticed, lying in the shallow water, a very large salmon. It was a sick fish, although it did not seem to be diseased. Jock let fly with the hedging knife and gashed the fish, but before he could secure it, it succeeded in getting into deep water, where Jock could not follow it. He had the mortification of seeing it float away down the river.

When he got back to his house in the evening his son said to him : " C'wa ben the hoose, faither, and I'll show ye somethin' like a fish."

" Guid goad," exclaimed Jock, " that's *ma* fish ! There's the gash Ah gied it wi' ma hedgin' knife ! "

The mystery was soon solved. The son, when passing over Leaderfoot Bridge, fully a mile down the river, had, of course, looked into the water, and just at that moment he had seen floating down towards the bridge a great salmon. He ran down the riverside to the first shallow and, wading in, seized the fish. Thus, what was loss to the father was gain to the son, and no doubt ultimate profit to the whole household !

* * * * *

Another story of this same Jock. When I go night-fishing I invariably carry an electric torch. I had been fishing down Tweedside one very dark night and was making my way back to the cottage when I heard a voice by the riverside growling and grumbling to itself. I recognized the voice as being that of Jock.

"What's the matter, Jock?" I asked.

"Ma cast's in a tangle," he said.

I took out my torch to help him.

"Pit oot that —— licht!" cried Jock. "I canna see."

* * * * *

I was watching an angler trying to foul-hook running grilse. At last he got into one, which immediately dashed downstream. The angler went after it. He had on a large overcoat, the weather being bad. He also wore short waders. Through the water he splashed, not over the ankles, for at this point there is a great shelf of flat rock. But there are traps for the unwary in that shelf in the form of holes, made for some commercial purpose long ago. They are five feet deep and two feet wide. Into one of these holes the eager "angler" tumbled. He held on to his fish, however, and soon there were roars of laughter as the humour of the situation displaced the shock of the sudden and totally unexpected dipping.

* * * * *

John was a simple soul. The contents of his creel would have made the orthodox angler "hoot" with derisive laughter. There would (on John's creel) certainly be a small bag filled with moss and the remnants of a "ween worms." The bag would smell abominably, having been the tomb of countless generations of wrigglers.

The flannel of which that ancient bag was made was so saturated with the juices of over-ripe brandlings—John called them "bram'les"—that the seven seas could not have washed it clean nor the sweet winds of heaven have purified it.

I must admit that John was a trifle careless with his worms. On one occasion his wife was worried to distraction by a mysterious and ghastly smell which

pervaded the dark recess where John hid his clothes from the human eye.

"There's an *awful* smell in that closet," said John's wife. "I've had everything out. I've washed the floor and the walls with carbolic and I can't get rid of it. Do you think it will be the drains?"

John took a cautious sniff.

He was compelled to admit there was "a bit of a smell." He advised his wife to go into the garden for a little fresh air when he investigated further. He then took a long breath and extracted from the pocket of his old fishing-jacket the bag of worms which he had taken with him on his last fishing excursion and had forgotten about.

* * * * *

A friend wrote to me: I know you are keen on fishing tales. The one I am going to relate is quite true—I was one of the victims. It happened two years ago. My friend, Mr. D——, and I arranged to have two days' fishing for the spring salmon. Mr. D—— was on the river earlier than myself. In fact, he had a forenoon in advance of me. We did not meet until the evening to relate our experiences.

Salmon were splashing about, but there was "nothing doing" with me until at the gloaming I saw a fish moving. I cast over it, and at the third throw I got into it. It was getting pretty dark before I got it out, and, sad to relate, it was a kelt of about 18 lb. Back it went.

My friend Mr. D—— told how he fared. In the early morning he got a fish, but did not know whether it was a clean fish or a kelt. The truth was that he could not at that time tell the difference. But a man who saw him get it out suggested that if it was a kelt it would not do for him to take it to the town in daylight, and suggested that he should hide it and come up for it

at night. My friend saw him cover it up, and they both came away. Out of curiosity my friend went back later on in the afternoon, but the fish had disappeared.

On my entering the town coming home that night I was accosted by a native, who asked me how I had got on. He was sorry to learn that I had got into a kelt instead of a clean-run fish, but said that if I wanted to take a fish home with me he could put me right and assure me of a clean spring fish, as he was in touch with the netters farther down the river and they could be got very cheap. In fact they had two to offer. I said I could not say what I would do until I consulted my friend, but I asked him up to the hotel, where we could talk the matter over.

Well, we did not want to go home empty-handed, and here was an assured spring fish each for the matter of fifteen shillings a head. The man said he could have the fish over in about half an hour. In due course he brought them in a sack. They were tied head and tail, both in appearance spring fish. One was pretty baggy but bright, the other longer and also bright and silvery. Was he quite sure they were spring fish? "Most assuredly," he said. None of us was expert at knowing springers from kelts, and the baggy one looked so clean that we clinched the bargain and handed over the cash.

We came home rejoicing with a fish each. Later we met. "Well, Mr. D——," I said, "how did your fish eat?" "It was a poor fish," was the reply. "Pale in the flesh, and when I was examining it I had the feeling that it was the fish I had had up the river. And yours?" "It was full of roe," I said, "and was more like cod than salmon."

We learned later that we had both been coddled! The "native" had got one of his chums to go up and get the fish my friend had caught and he sold it to us

in the evening ! In future we buy no more spring salmon from natives !

* * * * *

A friend of mine induced me to go burn-fishing with him, having excited me with tales of large trout which were to be caught with worm in a certain hill burn. When we reached the best stretch, after walking several miles, we parted company arranging to meet a few hours later. I caught numerous trout, but none over five inches. By and by I got a bigger one—fully an inch bigger. It tried to swallow not only the worm and the Stewart tackle, but rod and angler as well, so it died. Since it served no purpose to throw the voracious monster back, I put it into my basket, intending later to have a joke with it at my friend's expense.

When I got to the rendezvous I was hailed with, "How did you get on?" I extracted from my bag the troutlet, and, holding it aloft by the tail, said soberly, "This is the only decent fish I have caught!" He seemed to be disappointed and exclaimed, "They're not doing very well. I've got a dozen, but *there's none as big as that!*"

* * * * *

They were yarning in the club about their angling adventures. Each member seemed to have an experience more weird and wonderful than anyone else. At last one member said to an elderly man sitting in the corner saying nothing, "Say, gran'pa, you must have had some great adventures in your time?" The old man spoke through the clouds of smoke which issued from his pipe: "The strangest adventure I ever had concerned a member of this club. We were fishing the Tweed one hot day. It was very hot and the trout weren't taking. At last I saw a few fish rising near the other bank. I waded out; it was difficult wading among

the rocks. I hadn't been fishing long when this member I refer to came along. He shouted out, 'Say, it's too hot for anything. Come out and have some lemonade.' He held up his flask. Well, I thought I could do with a drink, so I waded out and had a pull. It *was* lemonade."

* * * *

A Lauder angler was fishing in the Leader with minnow and got a nice dish, including a trout of over 1 lb. in weight. He was in the habit of giving an occasional trout to a neighbour, a woman called Maggie—Mawggie, as, I suppose, it would be pronounced locally—and he sent the fat pounder in to her. Some time later Mawggie called on the angler. The following conversation ensued :

MAWGGIE : " That was a nice troot ye sent in tae me, George. Whaur did ye git it ? "

GEORGE : " On the Leader, Mawggie."

MAWGGIE : " It must hae been a gie queer feeder, George. Look whit ah got in its inside—fower serk (shirt) buttons."

Which was the truth. Four pearl buttons had been found in the trout's stomach. Maggie went away, but ten minutes later she was back.

" Dod, man, George," said she, " ah've juist been thinkin' o' that queer troot swallyin' thae serk buttons, an' it's juist cam intae ma mind that ye should tak' yer rod and gang down tae the same place. Maybe ye'll catch the troot that's got the serk ! "

* * * *

This story concerns a Gourock man. Now they had been getting good sport at a certain spot near the Cloch, and this man went forth full of hope. He had fished a long time, but there was nary a bite. This puzzled him intensely.

Some lads were playing near at hand with a ball,

and in time the ball found its way into the water near the angler. He retrieved it and threw it to them.

Presently a man came over and thanked him for returning the ball. He was a friendly sort of man, and he told the angler he was "fushin' in the right place, onywey!" There were plenty of big fish about, he said. He knew it because he had seen them himself. "Great big wallopers," he said. "They've been turnin' cairt-wheels oot there a' mornin'." No doubt he was surprised when the angler grunted his disgust, gathered up his tackle, and departed. The presence of the cart-wheeling "great big wallopers" explained just why he was catching no fish, for they were porpoises!

* * * * *

A youth was fishing in the "town water." He was using a trout-rod and small flies. He got into a "fish"—videlicet, a salmon. As he was operating in the middle of the "town" a crowd began to collect. It grew bigger and bigger as the tale spread, until "the whole town" had turned out to see the sport.

Meanwhile the fish was playing the angler. Upstream and downstream it sailed leisurely, the angler toiling pantingly after.

By and by the salmon decided that it might as well lie down. And lie down it did. The angler stood, his rod beautifully arched, keeping a strain on. The spectators began to grow restive. As is the way of restive spectators, they gave a great deal of advice, all intended to get that ridiculous fish to liven up. This way and that the rod was turned. Strains from below and strains from above were tried, but all to no purpose. The fish absolutely declined to take any notice.

At last two of the spectators separated themselves from the crowd. They sped home, and presently returned clad in fishing waders and armed with long poles.

They were determined to make that foolish salmon run. So they waded out and began poking about with their poles, always heedful of the warning not to foul the line. Still the salmon failed to respond. This was distinctly curious, not to say suspicious. It called for investigation. One of the helpers, at the risk of a wetting, waded cautiously out, peering into the water. At last his voice was heard above the din of the water: "Heh! There's nae fish here at a'. Yer hooks stickin' in a rock!" And so it was. With laughs and groans the "whole town" dispersed, leaving the angler to his own thoughts.

* * * * *

A clerical angler, accompanied by a ghillie, was fishing a river in which there were plenty of salmon, but he could not catch any of them. While they were sitting on the bank having lunch near a waterfall a large salmon attempted to leap over the fall. It did not succeed, and, on falling back, found itself on the shore. The ghillie immediately seized the gaff and said eagerly, "Will I gaff it, sir?"

"Certainly not," said the clergyman. "That wouldn't be a sporting thing to do."

The ghillie sat down again disgustedly. He sat for a considerable time, then turned to the minister and said: "I'm thinkin' it's a great peety, sir, that it wasnae you that was in the gairden o Eden. It would have saved a lot o' trouble."

* * * * *

Here is an angling story from Ceylon, told of a well-known planter—a pawky Scot. A friend called at his bungalow one day to see him, and found his wife busily engaged painting the house. The lady informed the visitor that he would find her husband fishing down

the river. Sure enough he found him there all right busily engaged catching, or trying to catch, trout. The visitor at once remonstrated with him for spending his time fishing while his wife was busy painting the bungalow. To which the angler replied: "Well, you see, it's just like this. The wife doesna ken onythin' about fishin', an' I dinna ken onythin' about paintin'."

The hero of this story was a border chiel who worked on an Edinburgh newspaper. He went home for the week-end, and instead of turning up at his work on the Monday morning sent word that he had turned ill and would not be back for a day or two. Some time later a news paragraph was received in the office. It stated that at Selkirk Sheriff Court that morning a man named (the name of the sick member of the staff was given) had been fined for salmon poaching. And it was observed that the date of the adventure coincided with the date on which the reporter had gone off sick!

* * * * *

I was speaking to an angler the other day who has been fairly lucky with salmon. "My wife got a grand way of cooking them," he said. "She puts a cup of vinegar in the water, and I defy you to tell them from tinned salmon!"

It may be that there are anglers who don't swear when they lose a fish, even a salmon, the salmon of a lifetime. I was once fishing near a clergyman, and all the time I was hoping that he would get fast in a salmon, play it for a while, bring it to the gaff, and then lose it! I did so want to hear what a clergyman says when he loses a fish!

As it happened the clergyman did not hook a fish, but he did something else that was almost as tantalizing.

He made a splendid cast—he was spinning—but his line broke, and his Devon minnow, trace, and many yards of line flew gracefully through the air and fell in the middle of a field on the other side of the river. The minister said, "Tut, tut!"

* * * * *

A German was fishing in Loch Lomond, and hooked so large a salmon that it towed the boat about the loch for several hours. At 6.30 he took a pair of scissors from his pocket and cut his line. Turning to the petrified boatman, he said, "It is time to go for dinner now."

* * * * *

A party were salmon fishing. The "lady of the house" was there, a guest who was fishing, another guest who didn't fish, but who was anxious to help, and the ghillie. It was in the month of February, on the Dryburgh stretch of Tweed, and many kelts were hooked. In fact, there was a regular procession of kelts. They were netted and the hook extracted; they were then seized by the tail and thrown back into the river. The guest who didn't fish did most of this work. At last a fine twenty-pounder was hooked. It was a springer, and a "perfect picture." It was duly netted. The hook was taken from its jaw, and before anybody could interfere the guest who didn't fish, but who was anxious to help, had seized the salmon by the tail and thrown it back into the river.

It was a terrifying situation. The angler himself was too weak to say anything, but the ghillie said a lot. He could so little contain himself that he ran up and down the bank uttering the most dreadful imprecations, and the fact that he was deaf made him roar them out. The lady went for a discreet walk along the bank, while the guest who was so anxious to help listened in amaze-

ment to the abuse that was being heaped upon him, although he dimly apprehended that he had done something wrong. When he learned he was duly contrite, but no doubt (not being an angler) he would be somewhat puzzled to account for such a fuss being made about a fish.

On the question of anglers who swear when they lose a fish, two anglers wrote to me, with their hands on their hearts, to tell me that they at least do not swear when they lose a salmon! The astonishing thing is that both anglers live, if I may judge from the addresses, in the same town. I am thus afforded an opportunity of conferring immortality on that town, but I will content myself by saying that it lies within 100 miles of Glasgow as the crow flies.

One of my correspondents writes: "You ask why one swears when a fish is lost. Well, here's one who never does—not even 'Tut, tut.' I never say a word, and I really don't feel annoyed at all. I suppose it is because I lose about two fish for every one I get, and if I did cuss my life would be one long blue streak, as I have enough cussing at the works to establish my quota."

My other correspondent writes: "You will say when you read this note that it is the biggest lie ever told by an angler. I have been an angler for over forty years, have lost many a salmon and trout, and yet I have never sworn (or drank or smoked) in my life; a prodigy, you say, for an angler. I get chaffed for it many a time, but I don't mind. I am not telling you this as boasting that I am more righteous in that respect than others; but it is not necessary to swear when losing a salmon, and it can be done without. I go out often with a friend salmon fishing and have seen him

hook and lose salmon, and his only remark is 'Good-bye.' He then starts fishing for another one.

"You mentioned about the clergyman who said 'Tut, tut.' I remember being on a fishing holiday with one, and the question arose about swearing. I told him I never swore, and he looked at me in amazement. 'What!' he said, 'never swear!' He could hardly believe it!

"On another occasion I was boat fishing with another clergyman, and he hooked a trout and lost it almost at the same time. 'Damn it!' he said. (Excuse me swearing.) I have also been out with anglers who, on losing a salmon, threw down their rod in sheer anger and sat down on the bank with their head in their hands, their elbows resting on their knees, and could not be comforted. At the same time, it is a very trying experience to lose a salmon, but 'Good-bye' or 'Tut, tut' does as much good to the lost fish as all the swear words ever invented, and which are mostly said in most cases without thinking. Yes, it can be done!"

Another reader wrote: "I was tickled by your query about what a clergyman says when he loses a fish, and although I cannot answer the precise question I can give you an analogous case. A clergyman and I were invited by another clergyman to join him in a round of golf on a South Arran course. The second clergyman had just finished an excellent round, and, as he said, being on the top of his form, he would show us how to do it. His first drive found his ball among bunches of rushes; his second went into a small rivulet. When he saw the result of his second attempt his exclamation was 'Assouan.' 'What does that mean?' asked No. 1 clergyman. 'It is the biggest dam in the world,' replied the other."

A lady friend of a lady friend of mine is quite certain of it. No amount of argument to the contrary will convince her. If you tell her that the trout is the variest fish in the river she will scoff. Here is the reason. She was picknicking at the waterside with some friends. The camera came into action. Somebody had been fishing, so the lady picked up the rod. There was a cast of flies on the end of the line. She pitched them into the water. Click went the camera. She pulled the flies out of the water and, by the beard of the prophet, there was a trout on one of the flies! She took it home and had it for tea. What she can't understand is how so many anglers go fishing and fail to fill their baskets. Men are such useless creatures.

CHAPTER XXIX

INCIDENTAL: LUCK

IT has fallen to the lot of two Glasgow schoolboys to have an experience which they will be justified in recalling as long as they live as one of the most remarkable that has ever happened in angling. But probably nobody will believe it!

The two schoolboys found themselves in holiday quarters on Loch Fyne. They were living at a farm, and there was very little for them to do save fish. But they had never fished before. However, they obtained leave to amuse themselves in the river near the farm and got their, I suppose now proud, parent to motor into the nearest town to get gear.

In due time the boys were fitted out with these "half and half" weapons called "boys' rods," reels with short lines attached, coarse gut casts and a few trout flies. By

and by the boys found themselves at the river with their rods duly mounted. They fished with one fly each for whatever the gods might send. At the end of one cast was a Butcher, and at the end of the other a Black Spider. The anglers—they are now entitled to be duly entered as of the Craft—didn't know much about casting, but somehow or other they managed to heave their flies over the stream. They had a notion that the fly had to be "worked," so they jerked the points of their rods up and down. They were standing beside each other, I take it. Presently one of the boys felt a pull at his fly, and a second later the other boy had a similar sensation. To their astonishment they found they had each caught a whacking big fish. In a moment or two, however, they found they had both caught the same fish!

There followed a prolonged period of high excitement. Fortunately the salmon—for salmon it was—was not particularly active. It did not dash about the river, but acted like a perfect lady. By and by it got tired out and obligingly floated on its side. One of the boys then waded in, grabbed the monster and hauled it ashore. It was in first-rate condition, and weighed 15 lb.

* * * * *

The following incident occurred on the River Forth, a few miles above Stirling, at a place known as the Cray Dykes—"cray" meaning cruive and "dykes" dam. There is neither dam nor cruive there nowadays, however, as the one is broken down and the other hasn't functioned for many a day. A few hundred yards above the "Cray Dykes" there is another small dyke, and above that again is a long stretch of flat, slow running water. Immediately above the small dyke is a well-known lie for fish.

It was here that a Stirling angler hooked a large salmon on the fly. There followed a hard struggle, the first act

of which ended by the fish carrying the line round a submerged tree root and leading to a proper fix. The line was securely held by the tree root, but the commotion in the water below the root showed that the fish was still on.

What could the angler do? Precious little. Fortunately another Stirling angler appeared on the scene. On discovering what was wrong he waded along the top of the dyke to the other bank, jumped into a boat that was lying there, and came back to the tree root. Cautiously he lifted the line with the one hand. In the other he held a gaff. His intention was to try and bring the fish to the top and gaff it. The fish, however, decided to take part in the game. Suddenly it leapt clean out of the water. The man in the boat instinctively shoved out the gaff. The fish fell on the top of it and was impaled. That was the end of the second act. The fish weighed 37 lb.

* * * *

An Edinburgh angler was fishing Loch Lomond and killed three salmon in one day. By doing so he repeated an experience which he had last season. That is remarkable?—it is nothing at all to the circumstances connected with the killing of the fish.

After the fish had been well tired, an attempt was made to gaff it. When the fish saw the anglers it made a dash under the boat. Thereupon the bob-fly, to complicate matters, caught in the headgear of the man with the gaff. Off went the fish—and the hat. It was, I am told, exceedingly amusing to see the hat skating about the loch. It would be. Adventure number one!

The second fish was a small one, and it was decided to net it. The fish was duly enmeshed and lifted into the boat. It was just over the side when the fish fell through the bottom of the net! Adventure Number two!

When the third fish was being played the handle came

off the reel, and the angler had to fight the fish by coiling the line in the bottom of the boat! Is that adventure number three or anti-climax?

* * * * *

The only running done by kelts, generally speaking, is from the river to the sea after spawning. There have been instances, however, of kelts travelling upstream instead of down. Such an instance has been brought to my notice. It is very remarkable, but I can vouch for its authenticity. A friend of mine deeply interested in all that pertains to salmon was fishing in the early spring and had the misfortune to foul-hook a kelt. I say misfortune, because foul-hooked kelts very often take a long time to exhaust, especially on a fly rod. My friend could do very little with this fish. Time and again it was brought in to the side and an attempt made to tail it, but it was no use. As spring days are short, and fishing tackle expensive, there was nothing for it but to gaff the kelt. This was done in a part of the body where the minimum of injury was inflicted. The fish was, of course, returned to the water. A peculiarity about this fish was that its tail was split in halves.

Another friend who gaffed the kelt was walking three days afterwards a couple of miles farther up the river, when he saw a dead fish lying in the water. He lifted it out and saw it was a kelt. The similarity of the fish to the one he had gaffed three days earlier immediately attracted his attention, and, turning to it the place where he had gaffed it, he found the marks of the gaff. To make absolutely certain that the fish was one and the same he examined the tail—and found it split in halves!

There was no doubt at all that this was the identical kelt that had been foul-hooked farther down the river. The fish had such a fright that it had begun travelling upstream. What is all the more remarkable is that it

would have to surmount a weir, which even for a clean fish is a bit of a trial. What had caused the death of the kelt was, of course, unknown, but I should say it was exhaustion.

Kelts sometimes show an extraordinary reluctance to leave certain parts of a river. Even if floods intervene and many kelts take the opportunity to go back to sea, a certain proportion remain in their own haunts. I know the case of a kelt which was taken in the nets in tidal water on several occasions, although floods had intervened in the interval. This proves that a kelt will not go down to the sea, in spite of floods, unless instinct tells it it is time to go.

While the fishermen in the River Forth near Stirling were working their nets they caught as ugly a salmon as the eye could light on. It was long and lank and "black as a toad." Its weight was 21 lb. As the catch was so unusual—the fish was obviously a kelt which had not for some strange reason gone back to the sea, although it might have been on its way there—the river being tidal at the place where it was caught—some scales were scraped off its shoulders and sent to the Scottish Fishery Board. Their examination confirmed the belief of the fishermen that the salmon was a kelt which had not gone back to the sea after spawning. When the fish was opened it was found that the stomach was empty. Growing on the heart of the fish was a hard, white substance about the size of a marble.

THE DOCKEN GRUB

As touching the docken grub, one of the best of all baits, I may as well pass on a small lesson in natural history which I got the other day from a grub expert.

I have always had the greatest difficulty in obtaining docken grub. I have dug up scores of dockens with the maximum of hard labour and the minimum of reward. Served me right. I had it all wrong; in fact, I didn't know the first thing about it. To get docken grub, which is the larvæ of the hawk moth or other weird wild animal, you can pretty well leave the docken roots alone until the summer is well advanced. In the spring you direct your attention solely to that strange plant known colloquially as the "tussellaggie." Now what on earth is the tussellaggie? That is what I asked when I heard of it, although, as it turned out, I knew it as well as I know the Ten Commandments.

It is that queer weed not unlike young rhubarb. It is silvery on the underside, and when we were boys, and very, very bad, and bold, we used to make it into shag and smoke it, enjoying the horrid stuff just as much as we now enjoy the cigar of the Habana, or the flake of gold, or, it may be, thick black. The true name of the weed is coltsfoot, or, for the benefit of the more ignorant, *Tussilago farfara*. It is to be found growing plentifully on waste ground, railway embankments, refuse heaps, and such delectable Gardens of Eden.

Well, having discovered a likely patch of weed, you merely dig and lift up the grub. The moth, it seems, knows its business best. Because there is abundance of sustenance in the roots of this weed during the winter it lays its eggs in it in the back-end. By the early spring the eggs have developed into caterpillars, especially for the benefit of anglers. Presently they feed their way up to within an inch or two of the surface and assume the pupæ stage. Then they turn into moths and, leaving their tents behind them (unlike the Arabs), they silently fly away.

They fly away to the docken, that bold heartbreak of

a weed, and lay their eggs there. That is why you find the grub in the roots of the docken later in the summer. And the moths which emerge from the docken fly to the benweed and lay their eggs there, and to get the grub in the autumn you had best go to the benweed. And the moths that come from the benweed go back to the tussellaggie and lay their eggs there.

Such is the cycle of the docken grub, so miscalled. I tell the tale as 'twas told to me, and am not taking my oath on its accuracy, but assuredly in the places mentioned will the grub be found.

Finally, to complete the lesson, to keep the grub in condition for a long period take a biscuit tin and fill it with cool earth and a goodly supply of the roots of the aforementioned tusellaggie, and dig a hole in the garden and put the tin therein, and, as the doctors say, use as required. I remember an old miner telling me that docken grubs may also be kept alive indefinitely in a similar tin filled with old turf. So you may take your choice. Only see that the earth is dry. If it is wet, or the rain gets in, it will be good-bye to the grubs.

The best grub to use is from an inch to an inch and a half in length. It is best mounted on a Thompson tackle with a size 12 hook, but take care to pass the hooks through the skin of the beastie only. Failing docken grubs, the cabbage grub, which is the larvæ of the white butterfly, will do as a substitute. It is green in colour, but I am informed that after it has been used for a little it becomes white.

On the question of preserving docken grub "Old Hand" wrote to me:—

"Get a box made in $1\frac{1}{4}$ in. squares with a lid to both sides. It may be made to hold any number of grub; mine has thirty-two squares on each side. Each grub has its own abode. Docken leaves cut small, or moss

fog, is quite sufficient to put in each section. I have kept them three or four weeks. although one-third of them may not be of any use. Secure the box in paper and put two feet in the earth. The box is best made from used zinc. I had one made with unused zinc and the grub all died—being poisoned, I suspect. My reason for keeping the grub isolated is that otherwise they kill each other, or, being tender built, cannot stand so much abuse as worms."

VORACITY OF TROUT

In the *Compleat Angler* Izaak Walton mentions a trout which, when opened, was found to have in its inside over one hundred minnows; I forget the exact number. The guileless Izaak apparently had not seen the fish; he had only heard about it. So, having some knowledge of angler psychology, he added, with charming naïvete, that either the fish had swallowed so many or someone had forced them into its innards. The father of angling, who could swallow tales which wouldn't deceive a six-years' child, couldn't swallow that.

Yet scarcely a season passes without providing striking evidence of the voracity of trout. In the *Field* a correspondent records the capture of a trout with live minnow. "Whilst performing the post-mortem examination (the writer says) we were both struck by the large size of the liver; when this organ had been turned aside, an enormously distended stomach was exposed to view, and on its opening a mass of minnows gushed forth, most of which showed but little sign of digestive change. These minnows were carefully counted and were found to number 103. On my lifting the fish by its tail three more minnows, which apparently could not be accommodated in the capacious stomach, dropped from the trout's mouth, making a total of 106. The fish was

then again weighed and showed a loss of three-quarters of a pound after the removal of the entrails and the ample meal." When first weighed the trout was $3\frac{1}{2}$ lb.

In one of my books of cuttings I find an extract from the *Fishing Gazette*, in which a Lancaster angler records having caught in the Hampshire Avon a trout weighing 7 lb. 4 oz., which was found to contain "156 average size minnows," while "probably a dozen more were seen to emerge from the fish's mouth during the process of unhooking and displaying it to various people."

In all of these cases the small fish had apparently formed a single meal. It was on one occasion my good fortune to see a trout in process of making such a meal. I was walking along the banks of Tweed one June night, just as it was growing dark. At the mouth of a small side stream I saw a strange commotion. On investigation I found it was caused by a great shoal of minnows which had been driven into the stream by a large trout whose back I could see sticking out of the water. I made a slight movement, and instantly the trout and the minnows disappeared. A few moments later, however, the minnows began to come back, and I noticed the trout quietly moving from side to side and so forcing the minnows up the stream. Never sheep-dog worked more cunningly. As soon as the minnows were penned Master Trout began his meal, and for some minutes—until, indeed, I brought the banquet to a sudden close—there was a continual smacking sound, and each smack no doubt meant that another unfortunate penk had died. While I was looking I should think that several score of minnows had been disposed of.

LUMINOUS FEATHERS IN NIGHT FISHING

All trout fishers who have fished at night must often have wondered how on even the darkest nights the trout

is able to see the angler's fly, and, indeed, any kind of fly. The angler himself can see nothing, yet he may hear all around him the sound of rising fish. If he lights a candle or switches on his electric torch he very soon sees why the fish are feeding. Dozens of flies and moths are attracted by the light ; great, luscious—from a trout's point of view—insects come round the light or settle on his clothes.

But the size of the flies has apparently little to do with it, because on occasions, just before it is dark, trout will feed ravenously on the smallest midges. How they manage to see them is a complete mystery, although in the case of the big night flies the commotion which they make when they are skating over the top of the water would be sufficient to attract the trout.

Many a time, looking over a pool into the pale glow cast by the last vestiges of the fading light, I have watched the sedges running over the surface of the still water. The wake which they leave advertises their presence, and they do not get very far before there is a swirl on the top and the fly has disappeared. But whether the trout has seen the fly or is attracted largely by the commotion which the fly makes, or whether there is any luminosity about the fly itself, or any distinctive smell—and some night flies do smell—is not known.

Night fishers imitate these night flies, but that does not always ensure sport. Indeed, the trout are far more fickle by night than they are by day. But in spite of the apparent and extraordinary keenness of the vision of the trout, how do we know that they see the angler's fly? On this point, which is clearly important, a short and exceedingly interesting article appeared in the *Salmon and Trout Magazine*, that excellent quarterly published by the Salmon and Trout Association of London. The writer, Mr. A. E. Barton, discusses night sight in fish, and in the course of his article he discusses

a contribution by Dr. Spencer in the *Natural History Magazine*, Vol. I, No. 8, on fluorescence and Dr. Spencer's exhibit in the Museum. This exhibit was "a cubical box of about two feet cube with a glass front, in which are various uninteresting-looking stones, quartz, and other objects all illuminated by an ordinary filament lamp. On the right-hand side of the case is a handle with a notice, 'Turn handle to the right.' On so turning the handle the filament lamp is extinguished and for a few seconds the contents are invisible in complete darkness. At the end of this time suddenly, and stimulated by a light invisible to human eyes, the dead stones glow and glisten with all the most wonderful colours of a seaside rock pool, the colours standing out against the darkness self-luminous in tints never seen in ordinary life. This is 'fluorescence,' and our most famous physicists confess that they do not know the cause."

Mr. Barton persuaded the Professor to open the case and place some hackles under the "dark light." He tied a bit of heron feather dyed with picric acid and some fur of an albino mole. The heron feather glowed with a dark brown or red colour, nothing like the green picric acid, while the mole fur shone with the luminescence of a luminous paint. He tried a neck of a reddish-brown fowl, which failed to fluoresce. So that fluorescence is limited to certain furs and feathers. Mr. Barton points out that those which fluoresce would do so in water exactly in the same way, for the light is not a warm light associated with heat.

Now the point which occurs to one is to ask what would be the result on sport in darkness if the angler only used in his flies feathers which fluoresce? If, as Mr. Barton shows, certain furs and feathers do not possess fluorescent qualities it seems futile to make artificial flies of them. If Mr. Barton or someone else

secured living specimens of night flies and put them in Dr. Spencer's magical box it would be seen whether they fluoresce or remain invisible ; if the former, then the imitation of flies for night fishing would take on quite a different aspect, because no matter how perfect the imitation might be, it would be useless if it failed to shine in the darkness—always assuming that the living insect has the quality of fluorescence.

STRANGE BEHAVIOUR OF TWO PERCH

While fishing for salmon on the Keir waters of the Teith I had a most amusing experience. The river was low, the sun bright, and I was fishing with worm. I was wading in quiet water, throwing the bait into the stream at the far side of the pool. Now, worm fishing is a very leisurely business, and consequently I was standing quite still in the water for considerable periods. From time to time I amused myself by watching the antics of the minnows which were darting about round my legs. Presently the minnows all disappeared, and the reason became evident in the form of a half-pound perch, which was lying quite still in the water a few feet from my legs. Then a second perch of the same size came on the scene and swam very slowly round about.

As I say, I was fishing with worm, not a bunch of brandlings, on this occasion, but a single earth worm some six inches in length and mounted on a big Thomson tackle. I thought I would see if the perch—a bold fellow—would tackle this big mouthful, and also whether it would attack the worm by the head as a trout does. I did not want to kill the perch, and my intention was to pull the worm away as soon as my curiosity had been satisfied. Unfortunately at the psychological moment, just when the perch attacked the worm, a small puff of wind obstructed my view, and when it had passed and



KEIR STREAM, RIVER LEITH

The Pool in which happened the incident of the Strange Behaviour of Two Perch.



THE MILL STREAM

Here occurred the incident described in chapter 29—Incredible but True.

I got my eye on the perch it was to find that it had swallowed most of the worm and that both the hooks of the tackle were in its mouth. I lifted the fish out of the water, and, holding it in my hand, examined it. Most of the worm was over its throat, but, thanks to the worm being so thick, neither hook seemed to have penetrated the fish itself. A steady pull, therefore, brought the worm out of the fish's gullet.

I was very pleased to find that the perch was none the worse for its experience, and I slipped it back into the water, expecting it to dash away. It did nothing of the sort. It betrayed no excitement whatsoever, but hovered round about for an appreciable time and then swam slowly away. I rebaited and resumed my fishing, always keeping my eye on the water round about my legs. The remaining fish was never far away; appearing and disappearing, it followed me half-way down the pool. From time to time I dropped the worm before its nose, and it would immediately seize it by the tail. I would then haul the fish to the top of the water, when it would let go. After I had done this several times, however, the perch came to disregard the worm. Experience had apparently taught it that it was "no go."

Having fished out the stream, I changed over to a small prawn, and commenced at the top of the pool again. I had not been fishing long when one of the perch reappeared. I dangled the prawn in front of its nose. It swam slowly up to it, obviously smelled it, then turned away. The prawn did not interest it at all.

All this time I was wondering what had happened to the other perch. It had not come back, and I was beginning to think that it must have been injured after all. I was rather relieved, therefore, when I suddenly saw both fish together again, cruising leisurely about my legs.

A MONSTER LOCH AWE SALMON

A Glasgow angler fishing Loch Awe gave me some particulars of a phenomenal salmon which was found lying dead on the side of the loch, having been washed up. It had been dead for some time, but was intact save for the head, where the "corbies" had been busy. It was a red fish, but my informant failed to notice whether it was a kelt or a salmon which had not spawned. Nor, unfortunately, were any measurements taken, but the four persons who saw it—experienced salmon anglers, including the boatman—had no doubt at all about the fish being a salmon. The boatman estimated the original weight at between 70 lb. and 80 lb.

An astonishing feature of the fish was the teeth. They were more like those of a dog than a fish. My informant was so impressed that he cut off a portion of the upper jaw, and this I have seen. The jaw was duly sent to the Scottish Fishery Board, and Mr. Calderwood makes the following observations on it:

Many thanks for sending the jaw of the fish with the pronounced dentition. In your letter of 16th inst. you refer to it as a salmon head. It would have been of great assistance if the whole head had been procured, and if the mandible and the vomer bone had been available for comparison. As an upper jaw, the teeth are certainly remarkable, for in large and old fish one of the characteristics generally is that the teeth have disappeared. They grow on the vomer bone, which runs along the roof of the mouth, first of all, and afterwards on the two jaws. On only one occasion have I taken fish (two) which approached this condition, and I was then netting at spawning-time for marking purposes in the west of Ross-shire.

WAYS OF THE OTTER

The late Mr. George Shaw, river watcher, Isle of Arran, wrote to me :

I had a talk recently with a friend of mine, Mr. Robert Logan, of Corrie, who is an enthusiastic angler and sportsman. He told me that recently, while on the bank of North Sannox burn, he had a unique experience when he saw at very close quarters a fine otter fishing two pools. Unfortunately, there were only brown trout in these pools, but it would have been most interesting if there had been some heavy fish. I have had many a debate as to the method adopted by the otter when hunting his prey, and from the description of this fellow's performance I agree with the authority who says that the otter goes careering through the pool until he thoroughly scares the fish until they hide, or try to hide, by putting their heads under a stone.

On one occasion, some three years ago, walking up the banks of the Machrie, I saw something white gleaming in a pool. On close inspection I found this to be four grilse, lying on their sides, with their heads out of sight beneath stones. Having my waders on, I put my handkerchief round my hand, and "tailed" one of these fish, which proved to be a fine, fresh grilse of six pounds, all alive and kicking. The other three were in water too deep for me to get at. A little farther on I got the "tail end" of a similar fish (about $2\frac{1}{2}$ lb.), freshly killed and eaten, so I am now quite convinced that this is the otter's method.

I have already mentioned a pair of these animals, and have been informed that the "dog" was seen carrying a fair-sized sea trout across the public road to his "den."

On different occasions I have proved to my satisfaction

that the otter does return to a "kill." I once, in season 1924, found a 16-lb. salmon newly killed. I set four ordinary rabbit traps round the dead fish, and next morning I found, to my surprise, that the fish was gone. I found the remains fifty yards farther up the river, lying on a bare rock. I set two traps again, and as there was no means of pinning the traps I secured a 23 lb. weight, and with a piece of wire attached this to the traps. Unfortunately, that night a very heavy flood came down, and I never saw either weight or traps again.

A LOCH TAY EPIC

A Glasgow angler and a clergyman friend had an experience on Loch Tay which they will long remember. They were trolling at the Killin end of the loch, and when a short distance from the "Fat Man" they caught something. It was not at first apparent whether that something was a fish or merely the bottom, but to prevent accidents the extra rods were "shipped." The boatman began rowing slowly, and it was then found that a fish had been hooked. It had taken the bait of the centre rod—a greenheart of 11 feet.

The fish did not do anything spectacular. Indeed, its behaviour was disconcerting. It merely followed the boat slowly. The clergyman had charge of the rod, and he took every opportunity to take in line. This went on until the fish was only a short distance from the boat, but very deep down.

The salmon did not exert itself in the least, but followed the boat slowly. An endeavour was made to get it to liven up, but all to no purpose. At the end of twenty-five minutes the clergyman handed the rod over to the other angler and another twenty minutes passed in fruitless attempts to get the fish to run. This was not good enough by a long chalk, so the angler decided to

try and force the fish to the top so that at least he could get a look at it. At the risk of smashing the rod, the heaviest possible strain was put on the line and gradually inch by inch, the salmon was forced to come to the top.

At last the eager occupants of the boat got a glimpse of the fish—a mere shadowy form below the surface—and they saw it was a monster as big and as fat as a pig. Then the fish sank again.

Again it was pulled to the top and again it sank. For the third time it was brought up and one of the boatmen said that it was ready for the gaff. He got into gaffing position and the fish was pulled up to the boatman very slowly. When it was still a yard too far out the salmon suddenly turned on its back beaten, and it was seen that it had been hooked, not by the mouth, but in the fleshy part under the jaw.

The strain on the rod, unfortunately, was too much for the flesh of the fish and the hook was pulled out. The weight was estimated at over 40 lb. The feelings of the angler can best be left to the imagination.

Humour, which can only be appreciated by others than the actors, was not absent, for the angler confessed later that the worst of it was that owing to the presence of the parson he could not say the things that he wanted to say! What a predicament, for counting ten or even a hundred does not meet the case in such circumstances!

The clergyman said some days afterwards that he had not been able to get the sight of that fish out of his mind. It haunted him.

VISION OF TROUT

How far can a trout see laterally in clear water? The question is of practical importance in minnow

fishing. After close observation I have come to the conclusion that a trout can see through the water sideways for a distance of not less than six feet, and that applies to shallow water of not more than a foot in depth. In my experiments I used the thread line, and threw the minnow over smooth water at the tails of pools. Practically every trout lying within range of the minnow was interested in it, and I noticed trout coming after it or towards it from a distance of quite six feet.

What I could not quite solve, however, was whether the trout were attracted to the bait by vision, or whether the disturbance of the water caused by the falling or rapidly revolving minnow attracted them.

This question was solved in rather an interesting way. I noticed a trout swimming leisurely down the pool towards me, cruising about slowly. I dropped the bait into the water six feet in front of it and a similar distance beyond, and spun it rapidly towards me. The fish saw it at once, and came after it like a flash.

There was no question about the fish having actually seen the minnow, and the change which came over its expression was highly amusing. From the complacent gentleman at leisure it changed instantly into a bold buccaneer. There was no possibility of it having been attracted by the disturbance in the water, because the fish was coming downstream, and the current would prevent the movement of the spinner from being felt by the fish.

The practical importance of the question arises in this way. If a trout can see a minnow in clear water from a distance of six feet, it is quite unnecessary to make more than one cast in every six feet of water.

Suppose the angler is going to fish a pool 40 yards long and 20 broad. All that he needs to do—I am talking

of the thread line—is to begin at the tail, drop the bait close to the other bank, and reel in. Before the second and subsequent casts are made he should take three steps up stream. A matter of twenty casts—allowing for one or two up-stream throws—should pretty well fish out that pool.

It will be seen that a very large amount of water can be covered in a day's fishing, with a minimum of disturbance of the water.

INCREDIBLE—BUT TRUE!

I was fishing the River Teith at Keir on a very hot, bright day in summer when the water was low and clear. The conditions were hopeless, and I stopped fishing, but took the opportunity of going up the river a considerable distance to see if I could get a look at the bed of a certain deep, rocky pool in which I was interested. This was in the Mill Stream in the Blair Drummond water.

The sun was shining straight into it, giving me a splendid view. The bank on which I was standing is about six or eight feet high, and is protected by large boulders. While I was gazing into the depths I saw some minnows in about eight feet of water. Not far from the minnows was an eel. I was curious to see whether the eel would try to catch any of the minnows. In order to get a closer view I clambered down the bank and waded into the pool for a few feet and stood on a ledge of rock. I was thigh-deep in the water and was gazing intently into the deep water in front when presently a salmon of about 14 lb. came swimming slowly down the pool towards me. Before it reached me, however, it turned and swam up the pool again. A few minutes later two salmon—one about 12 lb. and

the other smaller—swam up the pool towards me, took fright, and disappeared down the pool again at a high speed. Shortly after that another salmon came down the pool, swam leisurely round my legs, and as leisurely moved away again. A few minutes later another salmon—possibly it was the same fish—swam round my legs and “lay down” close behind me. It lay there for a minute or more and then swam away. A short time after that a salmon circled my legs, then swam under a boulder in the bank immediately behind me. It lay with its head downstream, or rather down and across. About six inches of the tail end of its body protruded from the upstream side of the boulder. I stood quite motionless and watched it for some time. I then “tickled” it—i.e. rubbed my fingers along its belly. Finally I gripped it by the tail firmly—not, be it said, with any intention of catching the salmon. I have too much respect for the strength of a salmon, and the probability was that if I had tried to hold it in the awkward position in which I was placed it would have jerked me into the deep pool in front. I gripped its tail merely to see what would happen. The fish no sooner felt the pressure of my fingers than it went off like a rocket. What were these salmon after? All of these salmon wanted to get out of the sun under the boulder, but could not understand the new “rock” which had appeared in the water!

THAT TANTALIZING TOUCH!

I would suggest that the majority of those trout which give a mere pook at the fly come at it slowly, their suspicions having been aroused probably by the glitter of the gut or the unnaturalness of a piece of metal protruding from the body of the fly. It is astonishing how a fish can give a good tug at a fly or bait and yet deliber-

ately miss the hook. This has often been commented on by salmon anglers when fishing with prawn, often armed with three treble hooks. The salmon will smash the prawn and yet avoid the hooks. Again, I believe that these fish have been very deliberate in their movements.

That is not mere speculation, but is founded on an experience which I had while spinning for trout with the thread-line. Thread-line fishers must often have felt trout give a pull on the minnow. They strike, but the fish has gone. It is a common experience to see trout follow the minnow for a considerable distance and then turn away. Occasionally, however, the fish will close on the minnow, give it a nip, and let it go long before the angler can strike. But even if the angler could strike quickly enough it is doubtful if he would hook the fish. This was impressed upon me by the lucky experience to which I have referred. I was fishing the Leader below Earlston one sunny afternoon. The river was small and gin-clear—an unusual condition for the water to be in at that particular part. I could see every stone in the stream I was fishing, thanks to the way in which the light was striking the water. I was standing behind a bush and dropping the minnow into deepish calm water at the other side of the stream, the cast being not more than fifteen yards.

Every time trout followed the bait, usually three or four. They came across the stream, keeping about a foot behind the minnow. When the minnow was over at my side I held it in the current, and every time I did so a trout came up to it very slowly, took the tail of the minnow in its mouth and gave it a shake, letting go instantly. This happened again and again. It was very comical really. One would say it was quite impossible,

considering the speed at which the minnow was revolving, for trout to touch the bait without getting the hook, because one of the hooks of the tiny triangle was pushed through the minnow at the root of the tail.

BIRD'S-EYE VIEW

Walking along the bank of the Tay at Stanley one spring afternoon I had an extraordinarily interesting experience. There was here a very high bank covered with trees, and I was interested to see two anglers harling. I was high above the level of the river, and watched operations with the help of a pair of glasses. Presently a salmon seized the fly, the boat was pulled to the bank, and I watched the angler play the fish. What thrilled me was the fact that I could see many of the movements of the hooked salmon. This was because I was so high above the river. It was very skilfully played and was gaffed in less than ten minutes. It seemed to be a fish of about 15 lb. Several times I saw it standing on its head, but what impressed me most was the way in which it frequently swam on its side, flickering through the water like an enormous sprat!

A friend whom I met in the train told me that the incident was of particular interest to him because it reminded him of an experience which he had with trout on Loch Leven. He was fishing in a calm and found the trout quite willing to take a sunk fly—a not very common experience. The point, however, is that owing to the way in which the light was striking the water my friend could see every movement of the trout before they took the fly. The thing which impressed him was this—the fish which meant to take the fly in its mouth came at it quickly, whereas the trout which had no intention of taking the fly, but nevertheless wanted to

investigate, came at it slowly, deliberately examined it, and then turned away without taking the fly. My friend was so fascinated that frequently he forgot to strike, even when he knew the fly was in the mouth of the fish ! What impressed him then was the forcible way in which the trout expelled the fly.

A correspondent, fly-fishing for salmon in Loch Lomond a short time ago, recorded that : " One of our companions rose a fine yellow trout. This trout came twice at a No. 6 Mallard and Yellow, but never took the hook into its mouth. The light being very good at the time, it was observed that on both occasions the trout seized the wings of the fly."

SALMON AND THE MINNOW

Who discovered that the minnow, used spinning, is a good salmon bait ? The editor of an edition of *River Angling for Salmon and Trout*, by John Younger, published in 1864, claims the honour for Jock Smail, a Jedburgh man who died about 1852. In the volume referred to the following passage occurs : " Jock Smail, who died about twelve years ago, was a Jedburgh man, and his principal angling streams were the Teviot, Rule, Jed and Kale. He was for a long term of years looked upon as, and he no doubt was, the most successful angler in the district. His feats with fly on the still pools of the Jed are yet spoken of ; and we have seen him fill a moderate creel out of one long pool where almost no other angler would have taken above half a dozen trouts ; and at this time he considered himself past his best, for he was an oldish man. He had a thorough knowledge of the habitat of all the finny tribes in the streams he fished ; and all his feats were performed with what would now be called very coarse tackle. He was also

the most successful Teviot salmon angler in his day; and it was he who found out the minnow to be a bait for salmon.

"Early in the present century (about 1805 or '6) he was angling one day in the Teviot for salmon in company with 'Auld Rob,' also a keen and clever angler. The old man, after vainly plying his fly for an hour or two, came to Jock, calling out as he approached, 'C'way, c'way, they're no gaun tae take; let's hame.' But on seeing three or four fish lying grassed he immediately ejaculated, 'Lord! how gat ye thae, callant?' Jock did not explain, but Rob, watching his cast, cried out, 'Mercy, laddie, yer flye fa's like a stane; what are ye fishin' wi'?' The minnow was shown, and the twosome kept the secret for a season or two, during which time they killed a large number of fish. The fish taken by the minnow were bull-trouts and salmon kelts, but in these days kelts were counted salmon."

Since writing the above I have read a letter published in *The Field*. This letter, which discusses the mythical Fordwich trout, refers to a small book entitled "The Kentish Angler, or the Young Fisherman's Instructor, showing the nature and properties of fish which are generally angled for in Kent, etc., by an experienced angler. (Canterbury.) May be had at Goulden's grocery and fishing tackle shop, opposite Palace Street. 1804. 8vo." According to the writer of the letter, the author of this book says "that for salmon fishing the minnow or the worm are the best baits." Since this book was published earlier than 1804 presumably, it is plain that minnow fishing was practised in England before Jock Smail discovered its effectiveness on the Teviot; but was the minnow fished spinning?

FOUL-HOOKED TROUT

I have been making inquiry into the question of anglers foul-hooking trout when fishing with wet flies in lochs. I have taken counsel with anglers whose experience of loch-fishing has been much wider than mine. I find unanimity of opinion that while trout are very frequently foul-hooked, especially on Loch Leven, the foul-hooking is almost invariably due to the action of the angler. That is to say, the fish is seen to rise, the angler strikes, and gets the trout in the body on the next fly.

One angler whom I consulted told me that on one occasion on Loch Leven when the trout were coming short he got six trout, every one having been foul-hooked, and I may say intentionally foul-hooked. This angler is blessed with remarkably keen vision. He saw the trout coming to the fly and struck at once with the intention of hooking the fish in the body with one or other of his flies. He did this because the trout were coming very short. As a matter of fact, the other angler in the boat, who had not the gift, only got one trout for the whole day's fishing.

On this subject a correspondent wrote to me: "A friend who has a pond stocked with trout has them so tame that they know him, and get excited when he approaches to show them off to his friends by-feeding them with bread crumbs. It is a common sight there to see trout smacking the floating crumbs under with their tails. It is therefore a habit. If this is done to a floating fly foul-hooking must often take place, and more so if wet flies are used, three or more flies floating near the surface."

GRILSE FEEDING IN FRESH WATER

A good deal of talk was caused amongst anglers in the Forth district by a paragraph which appeared in a local paper to the effect that a Glasgow minister, fishing in the upper reaches of the river, near Gartmore, had caught two grilse, each of which had in its stomach a small herring. The paragraph created a great deal of—misbelief! Anglers are naturally sceptical of the doings of other anglers and here was a tale which seemed to draw the long bow with a vengeance. Is not Gartmore a long way from the sea—forty miles at least; and is not the herring purely a salt-water fish? How on earth, then, was it possible for two salmon to be caught in the Forth at Gartmore with herring in their stomachs? It was suggested that if it wasn't a fairy story the newspaper had misprinted the word "herring" and that what was really meant was herling, which penetrate to the upper reaches of the Forth. This explanation certainly did not lack ingenuity, because it would be quite possible for salmon in a river to dine off herling. At the same time it was admittedly a strange coincidence that one angler should catch two small salmon and that a herling—locally known as lammas trout—should be found in both of them!

Now, it so happens that I, too, had read the paragraph in the local paper and was baffled. I therefore wrote to the clergyman who had had this singular experience. It turned out that I had made his acquaintance some time previously, and I was therefore the more interested to receive from him the following account of his experience: "I was fishing" (he wrote) "about 500 yards above the bridge at Gartmore Station, the bait being an eel-tail. The Forth, I may say, is hotching up here with salmon and sea trout. Within half an hour I landed two grilse averaging four pounds—one was

slightly over and the other slightly under that weight. On my way home I met the head keeper, who pronounced them both to be fresh run fish. On reaching home I proceeded to clean the fish, when I discovered in the stomach of one a fish measuring about seven inches, quite complete save that the skin was gone, and in the other a similar but smaller fish in a more disintegrated condition. Thinking that the contents of the grilse might be of interest to the gamekeeper, I showed them to him, and he pronounced them to be herring. This verdict was corroborated by several long-experienced fishers in the village.

“Now for the explanation. The obvious one would be that these two fish were fresh from the sea, and had not had time to masticate the herring. But against that there is the fact that no one in the district has—so far as I can learn—ever caught grilse in a similar condition. Moreover, it is hardly credible that a fish could come this distance with a herring in its inside intact, save for the absence of skin.

“But I have learned to-day that it is the habit of at least two local fish dealers to deposit their unsold or unsaleable herring in the Forth near the very spot where I caught my grilse. Is it not possible that the fish helped themselves to some of those? I am inclined to believe that this is the true explanation of the mystery.”

EARLY LOCHS

I was indebted to a correspondent of wide experience for a table showing the surface level of water above sea level of the principal Scottish lochs, as well as their acreage, and also some notes showing which lochs are early and which late so far as trout fishing is concerned.

As one could expect—since water temperature is not unimportant—the lochs which are highest above sea are

latest in giving sport. Among the early lochs are Loch Lomond, which is 24 ft. above sea level; Loch Maree at 32 ft.; Loch Ness at 52 ft.; Loch Ard at 105 ft.; Loch Awe at 118 ft.; and Loch Vennacher at 270 ft. These lochs fish in March and April. Loch Tay at 349 ft., fishes in May, as does Loch Leven at 350 ft., and Loch Dochart at 513 ft. Loch Katrine, 364 ft., Loch Rannoch, 668 ft. and Loch Doon, 673 ft., fish in June. No doubt seasons vary, but I am told that the above is approximately accurate.

The acreage of the lochs mentioned is as follows :

	Acres.
Loch Lomond - - - - -	17,565
Loch Maree - - - - -	7,058
Loch Ness - - - - -	14,000
Loch Awe - - - - -	9,505
Loch Ard - - - - -	600
Loch Vennacher - - - - -	1,030
Loch Tay - - - - -	6,500
Loch Leven - - - - -	3,400
Loch Katrine - - - - -	3,059
Loch Lubnaig - - - - -	614
Loch Dochart - - - - -	46
Loch Rannoch - - - - -	4,700
Loch Doon - - - - -	673

Loch Doon, it may be observed, has exactly an acre for every foot it lies above sea level. (Since this was written Loch Doon has been enlarged artificially.) The size of other lochs given in the list is as follows :

	Acres.
Loch Shiel - - - - -	4,840
Loch Morar - - - - -	6,596
Lake of Menteith - - - - -	652
Loch Eck - - - - -	1,090
Caledonian Canal - - - - -	3,784
Loch Laggan - - - - -	1,900
Loch Ossian - - - - -	657

But I have no notes showing when the trout in these waters begin to "take."

NON-FLASHING RODS

The following incident, which makes one think a bit, occurred the other day on Loch Leven. A friend of mine was fishing there with another angler. They started in the forenoon. It was a dull day with a nice breeze, and the trout were on the move, although they were not taking particularly well. Both rods get some trout. While playing a fish of about 1 lb. in weight my friend's rod—a split cane 10 ft. in length—snapped above one of the ferrules. He got the fish all right, but as he had no spare top and the rod could not be mended he had to fall back on a spare rod which he had taken with him. This was a greenheart, 12 ft. in length.

It was now afternoon, and the weather had completely changed. The clouds had been blown out of the sky and the wind had dropped. It was a blazing afternoon. As often happens in such circumstances, the trout went down, but, to my friend's surprise, he continued to raise fish. In the course of the afternoon he raised twelve trout, of which he killed four. The curious thing was that the other angler did not raise a single trout, although he had had the bulk of the sport when the conditions were favourable during the forenoon. Naturally, they fell to discussing the whys and the wherefores of this curious experience. The conclusion my friend arrived at ultimately was that his success in the afternoon was due to the fact that he was using a non-flashing rod. In other words, his rod was varnished with a flat or non-gloss varnish. As a result the rod did not flash when he was casting and so did not alarm the trout.

POSITION OF THE FLY

A friend fishing in a loch near Glasgow recently told me of an experience which interested me very much.

He had four flies on his cast, but the trout showed a decided partiality for one—a Yellow Owl. Indeed, he caught all his trout on this fly. His companion in the boat was catching nothing at all, and after my friend had caught several trout he advised him to “put on” a Yellow Owl. This was done; but it made no difference. My friend continued to catch trout, his companion caught only one.

But observe this. The position on the cast occupied by my friend's Yellow Owl was that of second dropper—that is to say, it was the third fly up the cast, counting the tail fly as No. 1. The other angler used his Yellow Owl on the tail. And it was that, presumably, which made all the difference between success and non-success.

It follows from this that when two anglers are fishing, and one is catching trout consistently on one particular fly, and the other angler put one of these flies on his cast, he must be careful to see that he puts it in the proper place. That is to say, its position must correspond with the position of the fly on the cast of the other angler.

PIKE AND FLY

Small pike are frequently caught on trout flies, but it is not often that the larger specimens are taken by anglers fishing for trout. It does happen, however, as the following letter which I have received from Mr. John Gartshore, one of the Kenmore (River Tay) ghillies, shows. I met Mr. Gartshore when I was fishing at Kenmore and had many an interesting talk with him. He writes :

“ This is about an experience I had late on Saturday night, June 24. I wonder if it is a record. I was fishing at the mouth of the river above the bridge at Kenmore. and was getting some nice trout. I saw a trout rise.

and cast over it, hooking what I took to be the trout. It ran well, and I thought at times it was a small salmon. After half an hour I saw two men on the bridge, and called one of them down. I had to play the fish almost dead, and the man lifted it out. I didn't know what it was until I saw it. It was an 8-lb. pike, and took a blue and silver fly. I had a great bit of sport with it, as the cast was of 2x gut. I am wondering if anybody has ever had so large a pike with a small fly. It was hooked in the corner of the mouth, and so could not bite through the gut. I had also seven trout weighing about 6 lb."

GULL, TROUT AND LOST CAST

A Glasgow business man told me of a remarkable experience which he had while trout-fishing in a loch near the city. A fish went off with a complete cast of flies. A few days afterwards he was fishing in the same loch and noticed a dead seagull floating in the water. The boatman rowed over, and both were astonished to find the gut cast which the angler had lost attached to the gull. Further, on one of the flies was the trout, still alive and kicking. What had happened was easily seen. The flies of the cast which the trout was trailing about with it had become fast in the weeds in shallow water. The gull, seeing the fish in difficulty, had swooped down and in its turn had been caught on the cast.

LIVE MOUSE AS SALMON BAIT

I happened to be in a tackle-shop when a customer came in. He asked a curious question. "Would it be legal in this country to use a live mouse as bait for salmon?" I became interested at once and made appropriate inquiries. He explained that a live mouse

is a popular bait for salmon and large trout in America. One day he was looking at a window of a tackle-shop. He saw in the window the stuffed body of a mouse, and he went in to increase his knowledge. The shopman told him that the mouse was used to catch salmon. The method is as follows. A large bait hook is laid under the body of the mouse and held to it by means of an elastic band. The angler then gets a piece of bark, and on this "raft" he places the mouse. He floats the raft over the spot where he has seen a fish moving. As the raft passes he gives his line a pull and the mouse finds itself in the water. It starts swimming about and the fish makes a grab.

Which reminded me of the experience related, I think, by the celebrated Captain Franck of his tour of Scotland some centuries ago. He was fishing Loch Awe, or perhaps it was some other loch. At any rate he saw a mouse swimming in the loch. Suddenly there was a mighty swirl and the mouse disappeared. The gallant captain was an opportunist, so he immediately went to a near-by house and procured a mouse. Hurrying to the loch, he attached the mouse to his hook and cast it into the loch. On the instant the bait was seized. The trout was duly landed. The captain opened the jaws of the fish and out dropped the mouse, apparently little the worse of its experience.

SALMON RUNNING HEAVY WATER

When we think of salmon ploughing their way through heavy water we exclaim, "Isn't it marvellous?" Well, I suppose it is, but an experience I had made me think it wasn't quite so marvellous as an exhibition of strength as an example of the adaptability of the fish or of a provision of nature which enables the salmon to swim through apparently impassable torrents. Actually the

amount of strength required to swim through such water is deceptive.

On the occasion to which I have referred I wanted to wade across a river. I tried to get over at the tail of a long pool where the water was smooth and only a few feet deep. I was defeated because the current was too strong for me. I went a little farther down where the stream was broken and apparently unwadeable. I didn't get across because the water was too deep, but I found I had little difficulty in getting well through the stream. I noticed also that when I lifted my foot to the top of the white water I could easily hold it in it. This seemed to explain to me why the salmon, by keeping near the surface, would get through torrents of water with ease.

' HOOKING LOST TACKLE

A medical friend has related to me a curious experience which he had one summer while fishing for salmon in Norway. He was fishing prawn, and got fast in what was apparently a large fish. It got off by breaking the trace. Another trace was put on, and some time later when fishing some distance downstream another fish was hooked. This fish got off too. The bait was reeled in, and it was discovered that the fish which had been hooked and lost the first time had been caught again. This time, however, one of the hooks of the prawn tackle had become entangled in the lost trace. When the fish was being played it had got rid of the tackle, which was recovered.

This experience, though naturally uncommon, is not unique by any means. In this matter the medical profession seems to be favoured, because Dr. J. Brunton Blaikie in his book "I Go A-Fishing," relates an almost identical experience, also on a Norwegian river. "A friend of mine," he writes, "who was fishing with me,

had a curious experience with the prawn. . . . He saw and hooked a very large fish on the prawn. After a long fight the fish broke him and went off with the trace. Two days later he was fishing the same pool, and saw the same fish. He cast his prawn over it, but it ran upstream. He followed it, cast again, and again the fish went some distance farther up. Again he followed it and cast. This time the fish turned, as in fury, and seized the prawn. He hooked it, but almost at once the hold gave, and the fish was free. It ran still further up the pool, and his gaffer, Jens Klingenberg, asked if he might not try for it once again. My friend gave him the rod, and Jens almost at once was fast in the fish. He played it for some time, but it got off. When my friend reeled up he found that he had not hooked the fish at all, but had fouled the trace he had lost two days ago, and he recovered this with the prawn hooks at the end."

GOLFER BEATEN BY CASTERS !

I had a discussion with a golfer as to the possibility of a match between a golfer and an angler. When I suggested that it was not improbable that the angler using a bait casting outfit, would go round the course in fewer casts than the golfer would take shots with club and ball, I was laughed at. I was more than interested, therefore, when raking through an old angling scrapbook to come on an account of such a contest. The curious competition took place in America on Briarcliff Lodge golf course, on Sunday, May 11th, 1924, and the competitors, as reported in the American sports journal, *Field and Stream*, were the famous professional golfer, Gene Sarazen, Harold G. Lentz (champion surf caster, who in 1922 broke the then long distance casting record with a cast of 463 feet 11 inches), and Jack Schwinn,

champion accuracy bait caster. It may be said at once that to his own astonishment as well as that of the crowd Sarazen was beaten on the seventh green, when the casters were three up and two to go.

The account I have is not clear, but I conclude that Sarazen was matched against the two casters, one of whom did the distance work and the other the "putting." Lentz, for the heavy work, used a bamboo rod 6 feet 2 inches long, weighing 14 oz. His "ball" was a 4-oz. lead sinker. Schwinn's outfit consisted of a 5 feet 9 inch bamboo rod weighing 4 oz. His "ball" was a wood plug weighing five-eighths of an ounce. During the match, which went the whole course to see if the casters would beat par, Lentz made nineteen casts, averaging $141\frac{2}{3}$ yards. Schwinn made thirteen casts—a total of 32 casts for nine holes. Sarazen took thirty-seven shots, five more than the casters. Further, the casters were three under par, while the golfer was two over.

When one considers that the golfer could drive a ball anything from 200 to 250 yards, the result might seem remarkable, but it should be remembered that the throws made by the casters would be dead straight, nor would they be troubled with "heiches and howes." Here is the scoring card, in which golfers as well as anglers will be interested :

Holes. in Yards.	Distance. Lentz.	Putting. Schwinn.	Totals. Casters.	Sarazen.
246	2	1	3	3
550	4	1	5	5
283	2	1	3	4
387	3	1	4	5
300	2	2	4	4
203	2	2	4	4
293	2	2	4	5
144	1	2	3	3
146	1	1	2	4
2,552	19	13	32	37

BORDER POACHING

A Tweedside angler, who takes no notice of the "close" season, says he had a strange adventure while fishing the Tweed one night not long ago. He was pursuing operations on a redd on which he saw a number of salmon spawning. One fish especially attracted him—a mighty male in close attendance on a female of the species. He saw it plainly by the light of the lamp which he carried (presumably that he might see better where to cast his fly). At any rate he saw the fish and the fish saw him, for it made a rush at him and gave him such a "dunt" that it nearly knocked him on his back! He says he has never had such an experience before, nor did he know of anybody who had; which is perhaps the only bit of the story that most anglers will believe. Still, strange things happen in angling.

If Tom Purdie's "muckle fish" had behaved in this way he would have had no doubts at all that it *was* Auld Hornie himself, and no yirthly power would have lured him back to that throat of "Queed" where he had his famous adventure.

The Tweedside angler already referred to also says that it is no uncommon experience for anglers wading across the Tweed at night to be bowled over by frightened salmon dashing downstream from the redds higher up, where other anglers are at work.

A DOUBLE IN "BATS!"

A correspondent fishing in the River Allan, near Dunblane, had an unusual experience the other evening. He hooked a sea trout—a two-pounder which he ultimately killed—on his tail fly. After the usual acrobatics

the fish steadied up, ran into a strongish stream and lay still. The two droppers on the cast were well above water, and the white maggots—the angler had garnished each fly with one of these delicacies—attracted the attention of some bats which were flying around. They dashed at the maggots repeatedly, and finally one managed to get fixed up on each hook. Thus the angler had to land his sea trout plus two bats. I have got bats while casting through the air, but to hook two bats, or rather for two bats to hook themselves in this way, must be a very rare occurrence.

DIGGING FOR TROUT

The other Sunday I had a gorgeous walk from Blackford over the Sheriffmuir to Bridge of Allan. It was what in the Borders would be called a “terrible fine” day, but the thing about it which sticks in my mind is an experience related to me by the friend who was with me. When we were passing a sort of bog he told me that some years ago, when the place was being drained, the men who were digging the drains brought up with their spades a number of small and very black trout. There was no burn or anything there, but a tiny ditch or two, and from these ditches the trout must have worked their way into the marshy land, which was at least solid enough to be lifted on a spade.

GULL TAKES MINNOW

When trawling for trout with a minnow in a loch (a correspondent wrote) a seagull followed the bait for several minutes, and after several attempts succeeded

in hooking itself. The boat was stopped at once, as the gull was being trawled after it on the surface of the water. As soon as I reeled out to ease the hold the bird took to the air, and I had the discomforting task of flying the gull like a kite. It took to the water again, and after a number of frantic efforts succeeded in freeing itself, very much to our delight, as we did not at all relish the possibility of having to kill the gull in order to extract the minnow. I wonder if this has ever happened before?

A MATTER OF—HORSES

By observing the conduct of the stock trout in a hatchery one may get an insight into the behaviour of wild trout. I have been seeking for information from the manager of a large hatchery as to the effect of hot weather on trout. It is common knowledge that trout are difficult to catch with fly in midsummer when the temperature of the water is high. This applies also to sea trout. Last summer on Loch Shiel and elsewhere sea trout simply would not rise to the fly, and that is a common experience with brown trout on lochs and rivers in July and August in the daytime.

This does not mean, however, that the fish are not feeding. I asked the manager of the hatchery I have referred to if he found his stock trout go off their food in hot weather. He tells me that the effect is quite the reverse. They eat ravenously when the weather is hot. For instance, his fish consumes four horses (!) per week in the hot weather, whereas when the weather is cold half a horse suffices. In winter the fish hibernate (just as they do in rivers), and for several weeks before spawning they eat nothing at all.

MACKEREL STRIP AS BAIT

From an expert: "Regarding the local methods of sea-trout fishing in the sea. The mackerel strip is undoubtedly deadly and will kill fish even in a flat calm. The method is to cut the thinnest possible strip from underneath the mackerel, using the silvery part. The strip should be about $\frac{1}{4}$ in. wide and about $2\frac{1}{2}$ to 3 in. long. Use a three-hook Stewart tackle, and hook in through the meat, so that the point of the hook just protrudes. The hooks should be fairly wide in the gape. Cast the bait like a fly, let it sink a bit, and then draw it slowly.

"Of course, in a good breeze there is little need to do anything but gradually raise one's hand and hand-line in the slack. If the fish are taking shyly and only nibbling, as they do sometimes, one varies the procedure by drawing a little faster or leaving the bait quite still. One method or other will be successful. It is usually a fact that if we cast a bait over a rising or jumping sea trout, that fish is hooked. He may get away, but he inevitably has a go at the bait."